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UNMANNED AERIAL WARFARE:
STRATEGIC HELP OR HINDRANCE?

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The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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Abstract

This paper examines whether the US can maintain political and public support for limited military operations conducted by unmanned aerial assets. It finds that historically the American public is motivated to support operations because of passions, traditions and faith. Furthermore, politicians have typically made an effort to “unite at the waters edge.” These historical guidelines serve as a basis for subsequent analysis. Next, a comparison is made between the manned air strike against Libya in 1986 and the unmanned air strikes against Iraq (1993), and Afghanistan / Sudan (1998). This comparison finds that unmanned assets offered advantages over manned systems. These advantages include the ability to quell concerns over friendly losses and potential POWs, the ability to keep the planning process secure until execution, minimizing negative pre-hostility press and exploiting the tendency to “rally behind the flag,” especially since the action is introduced *ex post facto*. The author then examines a limited war scenario using Operation ALLIED FORCE as a baseline for comparison to a notional war using unmanned assets. It is theorized unmanned assets will present difficulties when used in this type of scenario. They will allow political debate to continue well into the conflict, decreasing the applicability to support “our troops in harm’s way.” They also threaten public support by creating unrealistic expectations. Political and public uneasiness will cause increased constraints to be placed on military operations. Finally, questions will arise as to the morality of executing a coercive air strategy based on risk aversion. The

main conclusion is that the US should still continue with the development of unmanned assets. However, this should be done with the realization that this type of warfare will create enormous political and public pressures the military is unaccustomed to dealing with. In order to be triumphant, we must not only develop the systems, but the political and public relations tools that allow for their successful employment.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale. Countless duels go to make up war, but a picture of it as a whole can be formed by imagining a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance.

Clausewitz, *On War*.

War is a clash between major interests, which is resolved by bloodshed—that is the only way in which it differs from other conflicts.

Clausewitz, *On War*.

In these quotes we see two aspects of war that have become commonly accepted. First, war is a physical struggle between two nations, each of which possess the capability to do harm to the other. While the capability of the contestants may vary, there is still the ability to cause harm. For example, the technological superiority of the US forces in the Gulf War did not deny Iraq the ability to harm our forces. Second, a common assumption is that war will be bloody. It follows that since each side can inflict harm onto the other that this bloodshed is a shared cost of such an undertaking. Even in the lopsided victory of the Gulf War, the US suffered hundreds of deaths. These assumptions have proven especially troublesome in political debates to commit US military forces. The perceived public intolerance for US casualties, along with the assumption that military action will likely be bloody, must be carefully weighed against the interests at stake.

Technology may soon change these paradigms. Specifically, the US pursuit of unmanned combat systems might effectively eliminate the ability of our enemies to cause US casualties. Instead of two wrestlers engaged in a physical and bloody struggle, we can envision ourselves as the archer who would take aim at the wrestler. As long as we maintain our distance we are free to fire on our enemy until he succumbs. The first major step towards this type of military intervention occurred in the recent war against Serbia. President Clinton took the calculated risk of announcing no US ground troop involvement. Certainly, this decision was not the preferred military strategy to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo; rather, this posture was ostensibly taken to limit the risk to US servicemen. Even the operational tactics that emphasized stealth and dropping standoff precision weapons from medium altitude reinforced this type of mentality. There continues to be an increased emphasis on stealth and standoff weapons in both research programs and operational planning.

The combination of this sensitivity to US casualties and the growing technical merit of unmanned systems has given extra leverage to the proponents of unmanned systems. For the purposes of this paper, an unmanned system is defined as one that is capable of weapons delivery without the physical presence of an onboard human operator. Presently, cruise missiles and ICBMs are the only such unmanned systems. In the past there has been a great deal written on the technical merits, monetary costs and operational employment of unmanned aerial combat vehicles (UCAVs). For an overview of these issues, refer to Richard Clark's School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS) thesis, *Uninhabited Combat Aerial Vehicles: Airpower by the People, for the People, but not with the People*, Class VIII, 1999. This paper will assume that UCAVs are operationally

and technically feasible and that these assets can be procured in such strength that the US will have the ability to carry out a limited war solely with these systems.

Another type of unmanned system that is presently gaining increasing attention is a spaced-based weapons system. William C. Spacey wrote an outstanding paper entitled, *Does the United States Need Space-based Weapons?*, SAAS Class VIII, 1999. This paper will concede that the operational utility of these weapons will be significant. It will also assume that in order to put these weapons into space international legal objections will be alleviated.

Political backing for unmanned attack systems also seems to be gaining momentum. Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee has recently expressed support of an aggressive program to develop UCAVs.¹ He believes it is reasonable to have 10 percent of the operational deep strike aircraft unmanned in 10 years. As he says: "I think incorrectly, but nevertheless, the American people are looking to the future for less and less risk to our people, with chances for other military operations not to have casualties. I think that's unrealistic, but nevertheless it's a direction which our country seems to be thinking [about]. More high tech will help achieve those goals."² Space weaponization has an advocate in Sen. Bob Smith (R-N.H.), chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee on Armed Services. He claims that space offers us the capability of "...defending ourselves, our deployed forces, and our allies: and, if necessary, of inflicting violence—all with great precision and nearly instantaneously and often more cheaply."³ Overall, it appears that unmanned systems are destined to become a substantial part of our force structure.

This paper will examine whether the US can maintain political and public support for limited military operations conducted by unmanned assets. In order to do this, the paper will explore the basic elements of public and political support. Chapter II will examine the enduring elements of public support to establish a historical baseline. The discussion will highlight past studies on the public and political attitudes toward US casualties, enemy deaths, the length of the conflict, and ethical and moral issues. Furthermore, it will discuss the role of the media's interaction with the public and political attitudes. Finally, it will associate this public support with its impact on political decision making. This chapter will omit Operation ALLIED FORCE in order to compare that operation with a notional unmanned operation in Chapter IV.

Chapter III will compare three similar air strikes in order to discover how the use of manned or unmanned systems alters public and political support. The case studies used in this chapter are the strike against Libya in 1986, the 1993 strike against Iraq in retaliation for the assassination attempt on former President Bush, and the strike against Afghanistan and the Sudan in 1998.

With those concepts articulated, Chapter IV will examine how the conduct of a limited war conducted with unmanned assets will affect support. Since this has not occurred to date, Operation ALLIED FORCE, an "air war," will be used as a comparison. This operation was chosen because it represents a war in which the US conducted combat operations with only air forces. Therefore, this case provides an excellent opportunity to study political and public support for "air wars." With this knowledge, and the information gained from the previous two chapters, a solid theoretical base can be

established to look at the impact of relying solely on unmanned assets in a limited war scenario.

The final chapter will offer recommendations and conclusions. Obviously, with such a broad endeavor, it is necessary to make some assumptions in order focus the scope of the paper. First, the type of military operations discussed will not include actions in which there is an imminent risk to US forces, or our homeland. Additionally, there will be no allied manned ground force fighting while unmanned “air forces” are conducting operations. This would allow for the fighting of minor indigenous “rebel” groups, such as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in Serbia, but would discount the large-scale use of US forces, such as in Vietnam or Korea.

Notes

¹ Frank Wolfe, “Warner: Speed Development of Unmanned Combat Systems,” *Defense Daily*, 9 February 2000, 1.

² Ibid.

³ Bob Smith, “The Challenge of Space Power,” *Airpower Journal*, Spring 1999, 33.

Chapter 2

Historical Lessons Learned

This chapter will explore the data on how the American public currently views the use of force. This pattern will serve as the baseline for analyzing public reaction and support in later chapters. It must be noted that the importance of public support is not a recent phenomenon. It even precedes the Vietnam War, an event that drastically altered the US political arena when use of force is involved. However, public dissent and its ability to influence military operations can be seen in the War of 1812, the Mexican War and the Spanish-American War.⁴ In fact, the horrible public dissent from the Mexican War "...left behind sectionalized strains that began the process of breaking the old bonds of the union."⁵ While civil war is the ultimate result of creating political pressure, this chapter will explore the more modest aspect of influencing the political decision-maker to initiate limited military operations. In this respect this chapter will explore how traditions, passions and faith influence public opinion. Next, it will examine the interaction of public opinion with the media. Finally, it will look at how this opinion manifests itself in the use of military force.

Measuring Public Support

Professor John Mueller, in his book *Policy and Opinion in the Gulf War*, found that public opinion surveys are incapable of assessing actual opinions of the public at large.

They simply find that people “...faced with a particular stimulus in a particular social environment, can back a particular response.”⁶ Since surveys are conducted through an interview process there is an unusual social pressure on the individual. They “...soon find themselves pontificating in a seemingly authoritative manner on all sorts of issues to which they have never given much thought.”⁷ There are a number of other factors that affect the results of surveys. First, they are very sensitive to the wording and context of the questions. A large difference can be found in a respondent’s opinions when they are asked about their support for “going to war,” “engaging in combat,” or “using military force.”⁸ Therefore, before public opinion surveys are given much credence on their own, they should be compared to other information and sources. This chapter will attempt to discover the underlying “truths” about American public opinion. As Mueller concludes, “...people do not react erratically or incoherently,” there is a certain reasonableness and logic to their collective response.⁹ Consequently, we see some consistency over time in the pillars of public support – traditions, passions and faith.

Tradition

Bernard Brodie pointed out that the rule of reason is readily accepted for much lesser issues, but where war is concerned tradition, passion and faith usually guide Americans.¹⁰ The tradition of using military force is based on our traditional foreign policy. As such, William Adams offered seven major patterns of how Americans view foreign policy. He claimed that there is an underlying attitude supported by decades of opinion polling. The first pattern is that of “universal human decency.”¹¹ Americans assume that people are basically good.¹² However, we are prone to label opposing governments as evil or monstrous. Therefore, we can be genuinely concerned about the Palestinian people and

hostile towards the Palestine Liberation Organization.¹³ The second is “hope in communications.”¹⁴ He claimed that Americans are committed to the idea of discussing compromise. Americans feel that “...anyone genuinely interested in peace is always prepared to talk with the other side.”¹⁵ Third is the idea of “human rights.”¹⁶ Americans have historically condemned any government understood to be abusing its citizens.¹⁷ Fourth, Americans have always felt “opposition to foreign combat.”¹⁸ He claimed that, “as long as national public opinion polling has been conducted, results have shown widespread opposition to fighting overseas.”¹⁹ The fifth aspect is that of an “unoffensive defense.”²⁰ “Americans want a large national defense, largely because it is understood to be protection against actual combat.”²¹ Sixth, we hold “economic self-interest” as a top priority.²² That is, Americans vote with their wallets and are cautious to engage in policy that may hamper economic growth. Finally, Americans support “presidential leadership.”²³ They are inclined to support the President in times of crisis.²⁴ However, the preceding six issues serve as limitations on how supportive public opinion will be.²⁵

Passions

Passions characterize public support. While the “tradition” section discussed support in terms of how it manifested itself in foreign policy, this section provides an inward looking examination of the underlying beliefs and feelings of the American people. It will look at the attitudes of US citizens towards casualty aversion, enemy deaths, the duration of the conflict and support of the leadership. The issue of US casualty aversion is the most politicized of all the issues to be discussed. This issue was never more apparent than in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. In this war, “American public opinion was the essential domino. Our leaders knew it. Hanoi’s leaders knew it. Each

geared its strategy - both the rhetoric and the conduct of the war - to this fact.”²⁶ The perception is that the domino fell with our fallen US servicemen. A RAND study on Vietnam conducted in 1985 suggested that other factors might also be at play. However, they concluded that “...limited wars pose unique problems for democracies: Their benefits often appear abstract and relatively unimportant to the public, whereas their most important cost – growing numbers of dead US soldiers – is all too real. If the United States or a close ally is not directly threatened by a major power, the willingness of the public to accept casualties is not high.”²⁷

Eric Larson reached a similar conclusion when looking at casualties and consensus trends from the Korean War forward. He claimed that each operation is viewed differently, but there is a series of enduring issues that consistently influence public opinion. These issues are:

- The perceived benefits of the intervention,
- Prospects for success,
- Prospective and actual costs,
- Changing expectations,
- And the nature and depth of support for the intervention among the other actors.²⁸

This turns into a constant “...rebalancing of the benefits and prospect for success against the likely and actual costs.”²⁹ However, this calculus leads to very little in terms of specific guidance. A study concerning public opinion towards a generic US military intervention determined that 100 US deaths was the median acceptable limit.³⁰ However, this number is suspect. People generally do not have a good frame of reference towards numbers of casualties.³¹ In Gulf War surveys, opinions on acceptable numbers of prospective US casualties varied based on the starting point of the questioning.³² Mueller’s book on the Gulf War provides some insight on modern US attitudes. Prior to

hostilities, a group that supported military action was questioned whether they would still support military action given a specified number of US casualties. If the number suggested was 1,000 only 44 percent still favored military operations. That support dropped to 30 percent at the 10,000 mark and fell to 23 percent at the 30,000 point.³³ Mueller also suggested that historically there has been a 15 percent decrease in support as casualties increase tenfold.³⁴ Based on the data presented, there seems little doubt that Americans are sensitive to US casualties in limited conflicts.

However, there is a collection of data that suggests Americans are not as squeamish as perceived. In all, these studies may be viewed as caveats to the principle of US casualty aversion. The first caveat is the “Pearl Harbor” effect.³⁵ In this type of scenario an attack by an enemy may provoke willingness on the part of Americans to fight.³⁶ For example, the Gulf War analysis found that, “...upward of 90 percent said they were willing to ‘engage in combat’ if the Iraqis attacked US forces.”³⁷ Nevertheless, this situation has some nuances. Mueller claimed that a clearly defined enemy was needed, such as in the Gulf War. This is unlike a terrorist situation such as the Marine barracks attack in Lebanon, where a single lone terrorist did not invoke the same response.³⁸ Stephen Kull examined this type of phenomena regarding the US’s role in a number of peacekeeping operations. Among these findings he found that after the death of 18 servicemen in Somalia, the majority of Americans supported sending in more troops. In fact, polls showed 75 percent “...favored going after Somali warlord Aideed with a ‘major military attack’ if American prisoners were not released.”³⁹ However, this was at the same time that the majority supported withdrawal, or withdrawal within six months. “No doubt the fatalities in Mogadishu contributed significantly to the sentiment in favor

of an eventual withdrawal. But the incident did not so much generate this feeling as it simply amplified the already-existing attitude that the job was done.”⁴⁰ This leads to the conclusion that there is initially a sense of revenge when US forces are attacked. However, the death of servicemen will in the long run force a reevaluation of the operation.

There is also a great deal of concern over the public’s attitude towards enemy casualties, particularly civilian. Two underlying beliefs add to this attitude, those of ‘universal human decency’ and ‘human rights.’ While studying the Vietnam War, surveys in 1967 and 1968 found that the killing of women and children was one of the top concerns.⁴¹ However, the number of people concerned about this was always dwarfed by the number of people concerned over US casualties.⁴² Mueller was able to quantify the concern for total Iraqi casualties in the Gulf War: “...one might extrapolate from the comparative results that support for a war in which a hundred thousand (or more) Iraqis were killed or wounded was about the same as for one in which five thousand Americans became casualties. That is, in the view of the US public, one American life is worth at least twenty Iraqi lives.”⁴³ He supported this claim further by producing evidence that the bombing of the highly publicized Baghdad bunker tragedy produced no notable change in public support.⁴⁴ “Overwhelmingly, Americans said the shelter was a legitimate military target and held Hussein and Iraq responsible for the civilian deaths there.”⁴⁵

The next issue affecting the passions of public opinion is the duration of the conflict. This issue appears to be a subset of the costs of an operation, and is not a major driver alone. As Larson pointed out, the US has a “...low willingness to accept costs –

[especially in] prolonged interventions in complex political situations..., in which US interests and principles are typically much less compelling, or clear, and in which success is often elusive at best.”⁴⁶ Examples he noted were Haiti and Bosnia. However, the situation is quite different in the present no-fly zone enforcement in Iraq, where the interests were well articulated and supported prior to hostilities. It seems that each situation requires its own calculus, of which length of time is merely a subset.

A final aspect which falls under the passions section is that of the “rally around the flag” or nationalistic effect. This effect has been seen in almost all wars in which the US has been involved. The data show a large majority supported both the Korean and Vietnam wars initially.⁴⁷ In the Gulf War, this effect raised President Bush’s approval rating to over 89 percent.⁴⁸ However, this effect is not limited to major wars. According to Kull, this phenomenon occurs in all cases.⁴⁹ He claims that anywhere from 13 to 36 percent will shift their position to support the government’s decision.⁵⁰ However, in most cases this effect is short-lived. As the conflict continues, the public will constantly be assessing the cost-benefit ratio.

Faith

“In modern popular democracies, even a limited armed conflict requires a substantial base of public support. That support can erode or even reverse itself rapidly, no matter how worthy the political objective, if people believe that the war is being conducted in an unfair, inhumane, or iniquitous way.”⁵¹ The concept of “fairness” of a war stems from the long history of just war theory. This theory can be traced to St. Augustine in the late fourth century.⁵² This theory has been improved upon by the efforts of St. Thomas Aquinas, Francisco de Victoria (1548-1617), Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), Hugo

Grotious (1583-1645), Samuel Pufendorf (1632-1704), Christian Wolff (1679-1754) and Emerich de Vattel (1714-1767), among others.⁵³ For a more complete discussion of the contributions and origins of just war theory refer to Todd Zachary's thesis, *Wearing the White Hat*, SAAS Class IX. In fact, religious scholars admit that just war theory is constantly under revision and refinement. For the purposes of this discussion it is important to explore the basic elements of the theory, and how the public and the church view them. It should be pointed out that just war theory is intended to be restrictive. It is intended to show the general opposition to violence and bloodshed by limiting its use by Christians.⁵⁴

The first element of just war theory is whether the use of violence is justifiable, also known as the *jus ad bellum* criterion. The commonly held principles of this criterion are: having just cause, being declared by a proper authority, possessing right intention, having a reasonable chance of success, and a calculus that greater good than harm will be expected to result.⁵⁵ The second aspect of just war theory is that of *jus in bello*. This refers to the method in which a war is fought. This criterion states that noncombatants may not be directly attacked and combatants may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to achieve military victory.⁵⁶ These are referred to as the principles of discrimination and proportionality. History shows these concepts are commonly applied when enemies are similar. However, when enemies differ greatly because of different religious belief, race, or language, they have rarely been applied.⁵⁷

It is interesting to contrast public opinion and religious scholarship regarding just war theory in the context of the Gulf War. Specifically, when examined closely, there appears to be a far greater accord between the large number of Christian scholars, mostly

Catholic, that objected to, or at least questioned the “just” nature of the war and the general public’s perceived pro-war attitude. The scholars objected to the instigation of war on the just-war criteria that a better state of peace must be the goal of the conflict. They claimed that all non-violent means had not been explored. In their minds, if these means would have been explored fully, there was a chance that conflict could have been avoided. While this seems contrary to the popular perception of public opinion, polling data suggests otherwise. In November 1990, most people preferred compromise versus going to war.⁵⁸ Even in January 1991, “...most people said they were willing to give Iraq a piece of Kuwait to end the crisis, if the Kuwaitis agreed.”⁵⁹ Of course, most scholars and politicians realized that such a compromise would not have been feasible in the realm of international politics. Therefore, many scholars protested that the US-led coalition needed to allow sanctions a longer period of time to work. While the scholars contended that sanctions were not a morally neutral act, they saw sanctions as a far better alternative to war, offering the potential to restore normal operations quickly as opposed to rebuilding war torn infrastructure.⁶⁰ The public opinion data is not as clear on this issue since questions were usually not asked that gave a choice between sanctions and going to war. However, a December 1990 survey shows the impact of mentioning sanctions during questioning and its corresponding influence on the public’s attitude towards war. When sanctions were not mentioned, 54 percent supported “going to war.”⁶¹ However, if sanctions were mentioned only 46 percent were willing to “take military action.”⁶² This difference may be more significant due to the fact that opinion surveys typically show a higher support for “taking military action” versus “going to war.”⁶³ In essence, the public seemed to be willing to accept more “dovish” tactics to solve the dispute. Whether

deliberate or not, these views were analogous to the beliefs the Christian scholars held based on just-war theory.

The other main objection of the scholars was based on the criterion of *jus in bello*. Specifically, the Gulf War strategic bombing campaign came under enormous scrutiny. Byran Hehir, Professor of Christian ethics at Georgetown University, concluded:

...presuming both good faith and vigorous efforts to protect the principle of discrimination, the amount of destruction – combatant, civilian, material – caused by the air war was still appalling. The results of the Gulf War in this sense leave large questions unanswered about the relationship between discrimination and proportionality, as well as how adequately the proportionality issues have been framed and pursued.⁶⁴

The scholars claimed that even though the ratio of civilian casualties to sorties was far lower than in World War II, the damage that was done ripped to the core of society. They claim that such targets as local telephone exchanges, electrical generator plants, and civil ministries were not legitimate military targets.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the use of precision weapons made targets in urban areas and civilian population centers open for attack. Thus, having the ability to bomb an exact location provided an air of moral legitimacy to attacking unjust targets.⁶⁶ It is interesting to note that the public opinion polls at the end of the war do not support this argument. In data collected in three surveys from 28 February through 3 April 1991, 80-83 percent consistently thought that the “damage [was] about what should be expected in wartime.”⁶⁷ However, Dunlap points out that the “...rapid end to the Gulf War following televised pictures of the so-called ‘Highway of Death’ illustrates the new ethical and political perceptions that can influence policymakers.”⁶⁸ Obviously there is not only a disconnect between the Christian scholars and public opinion, but between the politicians’ perceptions of public opinion and the public’s actual position.

No doubt, the answer could be found in the 400,000 US troops deployed to the region and the great US fear of their engagement in a land war against massive Iraqi forces. The air war was tolerated – or applauded – as necessary to prevent the loss of US lives when a ground war began. The insertion of American lives into the calculus made the disproportionate destruction of Iraq ‘acceptable’ [from a public perception].⁶⁹

Media

An external factor that interacts and potentially alters the public’s support for military operations is the media. Stephen Livingston claimed that it can act as an accelerant, impediment, or an agenda setter.⁷⁰ The media as an accelerant is not a particularly contentious point. It has the ability to quickly present information, often ahead of official sources, pressuring political leaders to react quickly. Often it will cause political leaders to react without the benefit of being able to assess public opinion in that particular circumstance. While counterfactual in nature, it is interesting to wonder whether President Bush would have pursued a different policy after pictures of the “Highway of Death” appeared if he had had sufficient time to assess the public reaction to the situation, instead of the need to respond to the coverage quickly. It can be assumed that the accelerant nature of the media will require political leadership to use historical public opinion to gauge response to developing situations.

The media also acts as an impediment. This resistance can manifest itself in two ways. First is presenting a threat to operational security.⁷¹ The second aspect is to act as an emotional inhibitor, which represents the major interaction with the public.⁷² This fact has been acknowledged for quite some time. A Harris poll in 1968 confirmed “...that television contributed to the opposition [to the Vietnam War] through its vivid reporting of the horrors of war and particularly of the casualties to US servicemen.”⁷³ This facet

was the reason the military made control of the press during the Gulf War a central component of limiting public relations damage.⁷⁴ Press pools were used to help control photography during combat. However, this “sanitizing” may be a unique situation, and one that certainly has some journalists concerned. Ted Koppel remarked, “I’m not sure the public’s interest is served by seeing what seems to have been such a painless war, when 50,000 to 100,000 people may have died on the other side. Obviously this was done so they [the military] could maintain the closest possible control over public opinion.”⁷⁵ However, Mueller found that the media’s impediment effect was suppressed largely by the public’s attitude. He stated the media quickly grasped two clear lessons about what the public wanted. They “...wanted a great deal of information about the exciting war and...did not want to hear anything critical about the military.”⁷⁶ Furthermore, this perception resulted in the news self-censoring its stories. In fact, by one account 95 percent of the stories on military effectiveness were favorable.⁷⁷ This interaction suggests that the media and public opinion have a symbiotic relationship. The press will present information. However, the public is also a customer, and, as such, has the collective power to alter the focus of the information they receive.

The final aspect of the media is that of an agenda setter. Livingston concluded that the media does not really set agendas; it simply allows the priorities to be reordered in response to coverage.⁷⁸ In his study of humanitarian intervention, he found that the coverage was not uniform, and “...more importantly is typically triggered by official actions and associated with the presence of US troops.”⁷⁹ Mueller supports this point of view in his study of the media, but suggests that the public may also mold the press. He contended the media reports “...on a wide variety of topics and they are constantly

seeking to turn people on – and, consequently, to boost sales.”⁸⁰ The Ethiopian famine crisis of the 1980s is commonly referred to as an example of media agenda setting. However, it turns out that NBC television ran the first story as a three-day sequence to see if there was any interest.⁸¹ When there was a huge public response, they continued to report the problems. Nevertheless, there are constantly these types of short run stories being aired to “feel” out the public’s appetite.⁸² A great many get shelved, but the public response ultimately pulls the story out and sets it on the agenda.

Politics

The pressure asserted on the political system from the public can be seen throughout the process of military force application. This pressure can be seen in the initial decision to use military force, its application, and the cessation of hostilities. The decision to intervene in a limited war that is not low cost or brief can result in serious domestic opposition.⁸³ But as Lorell has pointed out, “...neither economy nor brevity can be guaranteed in such ventures. Concern for that lack of public support could cause policymakers to hesitate or put off making decisive commitments, or even abandon the option of any US military intervention beyond arms transfers.”⁸⁴ Edward Luttwak pointed out that this indecision is particularly a problem due to the political sensitivity of US casualty aversion. This sensitivity has the further effect of limiting the ease with which certain forces may be used.⁸⁵ Furthermore, in a great many cases this concern emanates from the military. They desire a readily defined objective prior to hostilities, assurance of no “mission creep,” and commitment to a swift and decisive resolution to the problem.⁸⁶ These factors, combined with real world uncertainties, make it difficult to introduce forces that have a high potential for casualties. As an example of how hard it is

to overcome the political inertia of introducing ground troops, Luttwak cited the deployment to Bosnia. He claimed that "...only after five years of intense national debate, amid countless reports of widespread atrocities and exceptionally destructive warfare, was the...opposition overcome."⁸⁷ This intense political discourse can also be seen in the months leading up to the Gulf War. Months of intense political debate were conducted in an attempt to swing public opinion. Mueller summed it up best when he said

Overall, then, Bush did not get war because he was able to swing public (or Congressional) opinion toward war – though, conceivably, he was able to arrest a deterioration of support for war. Rather, he managed to lead the country to war because, as President, he was able to keep the issue brewing as an important one; because he could unilaterally commit the country to a path that dramatically increased a sense of fatalism about war and perhaps convinced many that there was no honorable alternative to war ...and because Saddam Hussein played the role of villain with such consummate skill.⁸⁸

There is substantial evidence that public support alters the conduct of military operations. In Vietnam, President Johnson's decision to send only a limited number of troops following the Tet Offensive was influenced by public support. In fact, Lorell stated the "...importance of the decline in public support in determining the President's decision cannot be overemphasized."⁸⁹ In the Gulf War, the fear of public backlash over the bombing of a bunker in Baghdad caused a virtual halt to further missions in the city. In fact, since the inception of strategic bombing, politicians have shown a great tendency to be actively involved in target selection. This may be due in large part to the potential political fallout from an errant attack. The worst political fallout is one that severs public support.

Finally, public support can influence the end of the war itself. Perhaps the best examples are the Korean and Vietnam Wars. It was primarily the public dissatisfaction with these wars that cost both President Truman and President Johnson their jobs. Their opponents took advantage of anti-war public opinion to secure the presidency and end the wars.

Perhaps Clausewitz best summarizes this relationship between public support and use of force when he states, “Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will have a continuous influence on them.”⁹⁰ In a nation where the foundations of policy lie in the realm of public support, the public’s opinion can be expected to have this permeating effect. This opinion has been shown to rely on traditions, passions, and faith. Furthermore, there is a symbiotic relationship between the media and the public. The public is certainly affected by the information presented, but also has the ability to influence its content through its capacity as a consumer. Finally, the Clausewitzian theory was confirmed: US policy, which relies on public support, does permeate all military operations. The public’s opinion defines the type of operations, the type of forces, the conduct, and the ultimate acceptable outcome that will be supported.

Notes

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- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 32.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
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- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
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- ²⁷ Mark Lorell and Charles Kelley, Jr., *Casualties, Public Opinion, and Presidential Policy During the Vietnam War* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1985), 5.
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- ²⁹ Ibid., 12.
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- ³⁴ Mueller, 76.
- ³⁵ Mueller, 123.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
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- ³⁹ Steven Kull, "Misreading the Public Mood," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March/April 1995, 58.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
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- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Mueller, 46.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 79.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Larson, 50.
- ⁴⁷ Lorell, 18-19.
- ⁴⁸ Mueller, 70.
- ⁴⁹ Kull, 57.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Charles J. Dunlap, Jr., *Technology and the 21st Century Battlefield: Recomplicating Moral Life for the Statesman and the Soldier*, Strategic Studies Institute Report (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, 15 January 1999), 4.
- ⁵² Michael K. Duffey, *Peacemaking Christians: The Future of Just Wars, Pacifism, and Nonviolent Resistance* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 19.
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⁵⁸ Mueller, 36.
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⁸⁶ Luttwak, 37.
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Chapter 3

Air Strikes

This chapter will examine the differences in media coverage, as well as public and political support when air strikes are conducted with manned versus unmanned systems. Three historical examples provide the background for this analysis. The first case is the 1986 raid against Libya. The second is the 1993 attack against Iraq, which was in retaliation for an assassination plot against President Bush. The final case is the 1998 strike against Afghanistan and Sudan. Initially, an independent review will explore the context of the times, nature of the conflict, operational concept and mission results for each of the cases. The similarity of these cases provide the opportunity to gain insights into how the use of manned versus unmanned systems affected the ability of the military to meet political objectives. The goal of this analysis is to show that the use of unmanned versus manned systems has some predictable results.

Operation El Dorado Canyon

In 1986, President Reagan was firmly established in his second term. During his time in office he supported a robust and capable military. His efforts included the reinvigoration of programs such as the B-1 bomber and the initiation of new efforts, such as the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). However, this tough stance was primarily focused on the Cold War threat of communism, and its primary sponsor, the USSR. He

had acted to support pro-western governments in Latin America, and in Afghanistan. This constant struggle tended to place nations into one of two camps, those that sided with the US and those that sided with the USSR. In this regard, Libya was firmly established in the USSR camp, causing a pre-disposition for the US to act confrontationally against Libyan transgressions. A major concern when acting towards a USSR proxy was always the fear of escalation. Nonetheless, there were plenty of cases where the superpowers restrained themselves while sponsored nations battled. Korea, Vietnam, Israel, Egypt, and Latin America are all examples where superpower proxies engaged in military action.

While there was a predisposition to act confrontationally towards Libya, there was also a recent history of minor military incidents between the nations. In the early 1980's US Navy (USN) F-14 aircraft shot down two Libyan fighters. However, the tension preceding the raid had been on the rise. On 24 March 1986, Libya fired six SA-5 missiles at forces from the US Sixth Fleet.⁹¹ In response, USN A-6s attacked the site with High-Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARMs).⁹² At the same time, a French built Libyan Combattante-class missile attack craft was destroyed when it approached USN vessels escorting a carrier off the Libyan coast.⁹³ Finally, USN aircraft destroyed a Soviet supplied Nanuchka-class missile corvette on March 26th.⁹⁴ In all, a total of five attacks were carried out against Libyan ships.⁹⁵

The event that sparked Operations El Dorado Canyon occurred on the 5th of April. A bomb was exploded in a Berlin discotheque, which resulted in 2 deaths and 200 injured people. Of these, one US serviceman was killed and 63 injured. In the following days, evidence mounted linking Libyan leader Colonel Muammar el-Quaddafi to the terrorist

attack. The evidence included “irrefutable” proof that “orders” were given from Tripoli to place the bomb.⁹⁶ Additionally, there was also “highly reliable intelligence” regarding plans to attack Americans and US facilities around the world as well as US air carriers.⁹⁷ At the time, Larry Speakes, White House spokesman, said “Last week, three Libyan agents arrived in one African state to set up the bombing of our embassy, chancery and the kidnapping of our ambassador.”⁹⁸ It is important to note that the Administration pointed not only to the fact that Quaddafi had sponsored the Berlin attacks, but that he was planning future attacks in the near term.

This evidence led President Reagan to authorize an attack at 0200 (Libyan time) on 16 April 1986. The raid on Libya was called Operation EL DORADO CANYON. It entailed using over 100 aircraft to attack five target sets in two general locations, Tripoli and Benghazi. Of these targets, four of five were selected because of their direct connection to terrorist activity.⁹⁹ The additional target was a Libyan airfield that based Libyan fighters.¹⁰⁰ The attack aircraft were assembled from the USN carriers USS *Coral Sea* and USS *America*, along with USAF F-111 aircraft stationed in England. The reason that the plan required the use of USAF and USN aircraft was two-fold. First, the only aircraft capable of precision night attack in 1986 were the USAF F-111 and the USN A-6. But, the two carriers did not possess enough A-6s to accomplish a simultaneous attack of five targets. However, the addition of USAF planes from England caused some political and operational difficulties. Since the aircraft were stationed in Britain, it required the cooperation of the British government to carry out the raid. Furthermore, the desired route of flight would require the overflight and cooperation of France. French refusal

required an additional 1300 nautical miles be added to the flight plan, along with a significant increase in aerial refuelings.

The results of the mission were deemed a success. The USN aircraft successfully attacked the targets around Benghazi without losing any aircraft. The USAF attacked the targets around Tripoli with the loss of a single F-111. However, there was some collateral damage. At least 15 people were reported dead and 60 wounded.¹⁰¹ Among the dead was Col. Quaddafi's 15 month old adopted daughter.

1993 Tomahawk strikes on Iraq

In June 1993 President Clinton had been in office for less than a year. He had won the election by concentrating on domestic, particularly economic issues. He had been criticized as a draft dodger, war protester and weak on defense.¹⁰² During the Memorial Day ceremony the month prior, veterans had even jeered at him when he showed up at the Vietnam Memorial Wall.¹⁰³ The President's advisors suggested that needed to take a stronger position on foreign policy issues. This problem was compounded by the fear of terrorism occurring in the US. "The February bombing of the World Trade Center- allegedly the work of extremist Muslims-brought home to Americans that they were no longer immune from the terrorism that [had] plagued Europe and the Middle East."¹⁰⁴ The week prior to the strike, allegations arose that terrorists had planned a new wave of attacks in Manhattan.¹⁰⁵ This created pressure to react forcefully to the threat of terrorism, similar to what had occurred with President Reagan in 1986.

The conflict with Iraq predated President Clinton's tenure in office. It started with the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the catalyst for the Gulf War. Since the termination of the war, tension and conflict between the US and Iraq continued. No-fly zones were

established in the northern and southern portions of the country. These zones were a constant source of military activity. Iraqi aircraft would test the zone and ground units would fire sporadically at US aircraft. Furthermore, the United Nations (UN) inspections of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) sites created more tension. In response to Iraq's "stiff-arming" UN inspectors, in January 1993 President Bush, as he was relinquishing office, ordered strikes against Iraq's nuclear capability.¹⁰⁶

However, the issue that prompted Pres. Clinton to strike in June 1993 was an assassination attempt on former President Bush in April of that year. During a visit to Kuwait University a group of 14 assassins planned to use a vehicle weighted with 180 pounds of explosives to kill him.¹⁰⁷ Kuwaiti police quickly linked the group to Iraqi Intelligence. They claimed that this attempt was in retaliation for the UN sanctions imposed after the Gulf War.¹⁰⁸ But, US officials were initially skeptical about the amount of Iraqi involvement.¹⁰⁹ "Their disbelief was reinforced by the amateurishness of the operation, one of whose leaders, Mr. Ghazali, was an Iraqi nurse."¹¹⁰ Therefore, the US carried out a separate and exhaustive investigation in the weeks that followed the attempt. The evidence collected was mostly circumstantial, with the exception of the confessions by the plotters, which were suspect because of allegations that Kuwaiti authorities tortured the prisoners into confessing. Nevertheless, the Administration concluded that the assassination had been ordered from "the highest levels" of the Iraqi government.¹¹¹

The Clinton Administration decided to act on this information on 26 June 1993. The Administration claimed that it wanted to send a signal to "...not only the Iraq audience, but also the intelligence services of countries suspected of sponsoring terrorism, like the

bombing of the World Trade Center in New York. By attacking the Iraqi intelligence headquarters with cruise missiles, the Administration was trying to signal that all those involved in state-sponsored terrorism would be personally targeted in response.”¹¹² Note the similarity to the justification used in 1986. That is, it was not only in retaliation to a terrorist action, but also a desire to stop future terrorist attacks.

In conducting the attack President Clinton chose to rely solely on cruise missiles. The reason behind this decision was the desire to avoid placing American personnel at risk.¹¹³ After the mission this emphasis became clear when officials had to respond to reports of errant missiles causing civilian deaths. General Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, stated: “Clearly, if you used manned aircraft and all circumstances [were] favorable,” dropping laser-guided bombs “might give you a higher degree of success” than cruise missiles.¹¹⁴ “But at the same time, you’re risking a pilot, you’re risking an aircraft, and you have to penetrate through an air defense system.”¹¹⁵

The mission involved the launch of 23 Tomahawk missiles from USN ships in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.¹¹⁶ The target of these attacks was the Iraqi Intelligence Headquarters located in Baghdad.¹¹⁷ This attack called for the Navy to launch a total of 24 missiles. Of the 24, one failed to launch and seven missed their targets.¹¹⁸ Three missed the intelligence compound and landed in residential areas, from 100 to 650 yards outside the walled area.¹¹⁹ These errant missiles resulted in the deaths of 8 civilians and injury to at least a dozen more.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, US officials were pleased with the results of the attack. President Clinton said that the attack crippled Iraq’s intelligence capabilities.¹²¹ Rear Admiral Cramer, the head of intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, added later the Iraqis had “suffered a major setback.”¹²²

1998 Strikes on Afghanistan and Sudan

In August 1998, the political environment was in turmoil. President Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky was in the spotlight. In fact, on 17 August, just three days before the strike, the President admitted for the first time that he had indeed had a relationship that was "inappropriate." This revelation caused a firestorm of stories that flooded the newspapers. At the same time, six international events were causing alarming problems. First, Saddam Hussein blocked continued inspections of his nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs.¹²³ Second, North Korea threatened to restart processing of nuclear-weapons-grade fuel.¹²⁴ They also began construction of an underground project that some reports suggested could be used to produce nuclear weapons.¹²⁵ Third, situation in Kosovo was starting to become a major concern. Slobodan Milosevic was suppressing the ethnic Albanian population and tens of thousands of civilians were believed to have been displaced.¹²⁶ Fourth, the August 7th terrorist bombings in Kenya and Tanzania caused fear that further attacks on American citizens and property would continue.¹²⁷ Fifth, the Middle East peace process was stalled again. And finally, the Russian and Asian financial crises threatened US prosperity.¹²⁸ The increase in international tension, combined with the chaotic domestic situation, caused some critics to question whether the President still had the ability to respond with conviction. Ergo, there was an underlying pressure to respond forcefully, the same type of pressure seen in the earlier two cases.

The specific nature of the problems with Afghanistan and Sudan were a result of the terrorist bombings of the embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. In these two simultaneous attacks, 5000 were wounded and 263 were killed.¹²⁹ Among the dead were 12

Americans. As Sandy Berger, the National Security Advisor, put it, “From quite early on in the investigation, the intelligence community began to receive substantial amounts of credible information, from many sources and many methods, indicating that the Osama bin Laden group of terrorist organizations was responsible for the bombing.”¹³⁰ This resulted in the conclusion that the bombings were planned, financed and carried out by the organization bin Laden led. Furthermore, other evidence suggested a strong case against bin Laden. First, his group issued a statement to an Arabic newspaper on 19 August that, “The coming days will guarantee, God willing, that America will face a black fate....Strikes will continue from everywhere, and Islamic groups will appear one after the other to fight American interests.”¹³¹ Additionally, there was growing information about imminent threats to other American embassies.¹³² As Berger put it, “We had very specific information about very specific threats with respect to very specific targets.”¹³³ Finally, the Administration linked the group to other transgressions. These included plots to assassinate the President of Egypt and the Pope, bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan, the murder of German tourists in Egypt, and plots to bomb six US 747s.¹³⁴ Once again, the case was made not only to retaliate to a terrorist act, but also to thwart a future attack.

The response to this evidence was a cruise missile strike at the group’s infrastructure, including five targets in Afghanistan and one in Sudan. The targets in Afghanistan “...provided refuge for terrorists, house the infrastructure for their funding international trouble, and are used to train terrorists in the tactics and the weapons of international terrorism.”¹³⁵ The sites in Sudan were chosen because there was “...convincing information that for some time, the bin Laden network has been actively seeking to

acquire weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons, for use against U.S. citizens and our interests around the world.”¹³⁶ Furthermore, “...the intelligence community is confident that this facility [in Khartoum, Sudan] is involved in the production of chemical weapons agents...we also know that bin Laden has extensive ties to the Sudanese government, which controls this chemical facility.”¹³⁷ In this night strike, roughly 75 cruise missiles were fired nearly simultaneously from Navy ships in the Arabian and Red Seas.¹³⁸ A night attack, with a near simultaneous launch, maintained the element of surprise. Additionally, the timing of the attack was an attempt to limit the civilian casualties in Sudan.¹³⁹ The net result of the strikes was reported as favorable. However, bin Laden survived the attack.

Pre-Hostilities

The preceding case studies have an abundance of similar aspects. They were all conducted in an effort to retaliate for terrorist activities and to foil future attacks. The military option selected was a single air strike to damage the terrorist infrastructure. Furthermore, these attacks did not destroy the ability of the terrorists to conduct their heinous crimes, rather, they merely degraded their capability and signaled the resolve of the US to stand firm against attacks on our property or citizens. The significant difference between these strikes was the type of platform used. This difference appears to be most significant in three respects. The first concerned the amount of pre-conflict debate, consensus building and media coverage. The second concerned the amount of coverage devoted to the operation. Finally, there was the aspect of how the public and the politicians viewed these strikes. Analysis of these cases shows that the ability of

unmanned assets to limit the amount of planning, increase the security of the operation, and eliminate friendly casualties are the primary reasons for these key differences.

Before the 1986 strike on Libya, there were vast amounts of coverage and posturing that took place in the media. The most striking aspect is that the entire operation seems to have been played out in the press prior to any hostilities taking place. Reports circulated days prior that "...the impression conveyed by the Administration [is] that the United States is moving towards a military strike against Libya."¹⁴⁰ Front-page stories also contained news of USN carrier battle group activities. As the two carriers exercised off the Libyan coast it was reported that "time was getting short" for a decision to use military force.¹⁴¹ There were other political moves that signaled the US was going to pursue a military option. The Administration "...sent Vernon A. Walters, the chief American delegate to the United Nation, to European capitals to seek support for possible American action against Libya."¹⁴² It was also front-page news when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher agreed to the use of British bases for American planes striking at Libya.¹⁴³ Congressional leaders spoke out about the possible military confrontation with Libya. However, the primary focus of their statements was not the question of whether the military action was the proper course, but the need for the White House to consult them prior to making a decision. In fact, "a bipartisan group of 10 House members ...sent a telegram to Reagan saying that it is 'crystal clear' that the war powers act requires consultation with Congress before hostilities are initiated."¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, when the meeting was scheduled between congressional leaders and the president, that also made it into print. Overall, the pre-hostilities period was given significant coverage in the media.

On the other hand, the other two historical examples, Iraq and Afghanistan/Sudan, appeared primarily as back page news fodder prior to the attack. A review of the Pentagon's "Early Bird" press clippings in the days preceding the 1993 attack on Iraq is quite revealing.¹⁴⁵ While this service is specifically designed to gather military-related articles from newspaper sources, there were only two collected on the potential for military action against Iraq. The first was an article on page 16 of the *Wall Street Journal* that weighed the pros and cons of military action in retaliation to Iraq's transgressions. Specifically, it urged President Clinton to take action against Iraq's pattern of misbehavior and not specifically in response to the assassination attempt on Bush.¹⁴⁶ The second article discussed the USN decision to pull its carrier out of the Persian Gulf.¹⁴⁷ It was noted that this was a particularly inopportune time to reduce US military presence since "Mr. Clinton is...under mounting pressure to retaliate militarily for Iraq's alleged plot to assassinate George Bush."¹⁴⁸ However, the real focus of the article was not on the military capability to attack Iraq. It centered on the fact that the move might be tied to the USN's quarrel with the Administration over a proposal to reduce carrier strength from 12 to 10. In essence, there was almost no pre-attack coverage, especially compared to the Libyan strike.

The 1998 strikes represent the middle ground in terms of the attention generated. However, this coverage resembled the 1993 attacks far more than the 1986 one. In the days preceding the strike, there were various articles about the bombing of US embassies in Africa and those responsible for sponsoring this crime. There were reports of Pakistan arresting two suspects when they tried to cross into Afghanistan.¹⁴⁹ Other articles pointed to Osama bin Laden as the leading suspect, and spoke of US efforts to pry him out of

Afghanistan.¹⁵⁰ They pointed out the mixed signals coming from the de facto government of Afghanistan. Some sources said that the Afghans might have been willing to turn over bin Laden if there had been sufficient proof; others claimed that the Afghans were committed to shelter and protect him. It is interesting to note that some felt “...diplomacy may be the only answer, since several U.S. officials said that a military or covert operation to capture bin Laden is unlikely or impossible.”¹⁵¹ Furthermore, one diplomat in the region said, “...you can’t shoot a Tomahawk at Kandahar from some ship in the ocean.”¹⁵² Certainly the idea of an impending attack, or of planning such an operation, was not in the media’s grasp.

Obviously, the vast difference in the media’s coverage of impending military action cannot be completely attributed to the type of platform used. Certainly, there were other factors at play. For example, in the 1998 case, the President’s affair with an intern had been recently acknowledged publicly. However, as a counter to this argument, in 1993, even military base closure news seemed to attract more media attention than the strike that was being planned. It could also have been that the media believed such attacks on terrorist targets were not particularly news worthy. Perhaps, since the situations were similar with respect to the 1986 event, the public had already decided to support military action against terrorism and subsequent attacks were considered a mere continuation of an ongoing campaign.

While disparities in the amount of media coverage cannot be solely attributed to the type of platform used, it does have an impact. In the case of the Libyan raid, the use of manned aircraft significantly reduced the ability to keep the operation secret, even if it was desired. The reports of carrier movement, fleet exercises and foreign base usage all

were front page news. The use of manned aircraft required more individuals to be involved in the planning process, hence a greater difficulty keeping it secret. However, the use of unmanned cruise missiles gave the president a more secure option. In the 1993 case, "...President Clinton gave no cue that he ordered an attack against Iraq and that the missiles would be fired within hours as he jogged along the Potomac and later played golf Saturday."¹⁵³ In fact in 1998, "...many Pentagon officials who otherwise would have been involved in the planning stages of such an operation were brought into the know only after the Tomahawks struck their targets."¹⁵⁴ Apparently even some top aides to Defense Secretary William Cohen were kept in the dark.¹⁵⁵

The next difference is that of having to build consensus for an operation. There was an apparent effort in the 1986 strike to have our diplomatic and economic moves, aimed at resolving the situation, well publicized. This amount of effort does not appear in the other two cases. In the 1993 and 1998 cases, relatively little appeared in the press to educate and convince the public of the necessity of the mission. Of course, this may simply have been a situation in which different presidents have different ways of dealing with the media. However, given the enormous amount of effort the Clinton Administration used to convince the public about the use of peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, this seems a rather weak argument. Instead, the ability to conduct military strikes without risk to our men and women does not require the President to devote a large effort to building that consensus. This freedom of action is due to the fact that the risk of American casualties and, worst, American captives, becomes negligible. Officials can be reasonably certain that the operation will be short lived. Chapter 2 noted that American support generally fades as time wears on. The use of unmanned platforms limits the

chance of creating a self-induced lingering American captive crisis similar to the one faced by President Carter in Iran.

The need for consensus can also be seen in another area. The need to notify and build a cooperative agreement with allies is often a more significant factor for manned platforms. In the Libya case, the amount of cooperation required the President to send a special representative to secure cooperation, some of which was not forthcoming. However, this need is diminished, or ceases to exist with unmanned systems. In the 1998 attack on Afghanistan, the missiles' flight path took them over Pakistan. However, there was no special envoy sent to secure their cooperation. Instead, the Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Ralston, was sent to Pakistan. He was sent there "...to ensure that the launch of missiles from USN ships in the Arabian Sea didn't inadvertently start a war in the subcontinent."¹⁵⁶ In fact, General Ralston stated afterwards, "I didn't in any way tell the Pakistanis what was going on until after the attack."¹⁵⁷ Certainly this use of unmanned systems presented a significant decrease in the effort required to achieve the necessary cooperation to conduct operations.

Reporting of the Strike

All of the strikes got a significant amount of press coverage. However, there are some differences attributable to the use of unmanned assets. In the 1986 case, there was a significant amount of material written on the human side of the attack. Headlines were full of the news that one F-111 was missing as a result of the raid, the refusal of France to grant overflight rights thus extending the route, problems with Spain over an emergency landing by a US aircraft involved in the raid, and the performance of our aircrews. In the case of the attack on Iraq, the nature of the coverage differed. There was a great deal

more emphasis placed on the reason behind the attacks. This is probably due to the fact that the initial coverage of the impending action was so sparse. Additionally, the errant missiles created quite a lot of coverage. These errant missiles were blamed for the death of eight civilians. There was also considerably more coverage questioning the use of military force to solve this problem. The tomahawk missile's accuracy was also questioned. Articles were written that compared the 1993 Tomahawk strike to their historical miss rate, a rate which was not as accurate as military officials lead the public to believe in the wake of the Gulf War.¹⁵⁸ The 1998 attacks were similar to the attacks on Iraq. Specifically, there was a great deal printed on two aspects of the attack. First was the reasoning behind the attack on Sudan. This received a significant amount of coverage because the linkage between the bin Laden terrorist group and the chemical factory was previously non-existent in the papers. Second, the timing for the strike was questioned. President Clinton had just admitted to having an affair the week prior. Many writers initially questioned whether this attack was simply a "Wag the Dog" scenario.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, we find that, similar to the Iraq case, the level of pre-attack media altered the post strike reporting. There was a tendency to highlight the reasons behind the attack as opposed to the attack itself. Consequently, we see a situation where the pre and post-hostilities media coverage is influenced by the type of platform used. The question then becomes whether public and political support is altered by the difference in coverage.

Public and Political Support

Although the amount and nature of media coverage varied between the manned Libyan attack and the 1993 and 1998 cruise missile attacks, the opinion of the public remained relatively constant. The areas that are of the most concern are the overall

approval of the strike, the view of civilian casualties, and the impact of the strikes on future terrorism (see Table 1). As can be seen by the table, the majority of Americans favored the attacks. This data supports the assertion in Chapter 2 that an Administration will receive a ‘boost’ in support at the beginning of a military operation. This boost appears not only in the approval of the operation, but in the approval rating of the President in all three cases.¹⁶⁰ It appears that in situations where a *fait accompli* strike is presented to the public, they will flock to support the cause, referred to as the “rally around the flag effect.” Secondly, it appears the majority supported strikes, regardless of the minor civilian casualties that occurred. One can also assume that this was probably true for the Libyan case. Obviously, the pollsters felt that the question was not important enough to even ask, which might lead one to conclude that it was not a major issue. Furthermore, polls “...found 8-to-1 support for future U.S. raids [in 1986].”¹⁶¹ Since this question was asked after the raid, and there were civilian casualties, we can assume that people generally accepted that it was a consequence of strikes. However, it should also be noted that a significant group thought it was immoral to attack the sites if we had known beforehand that there were going to be civilian casualties. In the case of Iraq, 37% stated this opinion and in the Afghanistan/Sudan case the number was 27%.¹⁶² Finally, it is interesting to note that a large section of the public thought that the strikes would actually increase international terrorism. In fact, that was the majority opinion in the Iraq case.¹⁶³

Table 1. Polling Data From US Air Strikes on Terrorism

STRIKE	Approval	Right to attack – regardless of civilian casualties	Attacks more likely to increase terrorist actions
1986 – Libya	71%	*not polled	40%

1993 – Iraq	66%	53%	54%
1998 – Afghanistan/Sudan	66%	65%	47%

Sources: Libya data taken from “Libyan Raid,” *The Gallup Report*, April 1986, 2-12. The Iraq data taken from “Public Backs Air Strike,” *The Gallup Poll Monthly*, June 1993, 23-25. The Afghanistan/Sudan data taken from “Reaction to U.S. Military Strikes,” *The New York Times*, 22 August 1998, 10.

The table also shows that the support for the Libyan raid was slightly higher than the unmanned strikes. This also seems to support historical evidence and common sense conclusions. Chapter 2 pointed out that President Bush’s success in leading the country to the Gulf War was because he “...was able to keep the issue brewing as an important one; [and] because he...dramatically increased a sense of fatalism about war.”¹⁶⁴ Of course, this was due in large part to a robust media campaign. We see here that the larger media campaign against Libya resulted in greater support for that operation compared to the unmanned attacks. Additionally, a much larger percentage of the population saw the attacks leading to increasing terrorism, in effect failing in its broader aims, when unmanned assets were used. This might be a case where the amount of pre-strike coverage of the US position, hence resolve, affects the perception of how much US prestige is put on the line. When there is a large amount of pre-hostilities coverage the public is more conscious of the risk to US prestige and more willing to be optimistic regarding the results. However, when unmanned assets are used and the amount of coverage is limited the expected results will be more pessimistic.

Another aspect of support is that shown by the Congress. In all the cases the overwhelming response was support of the President and his decision. Even in 1998, when intense domestic political fights over the Starr investigation eventually lead to the impeachment of the President, most congressmen stood by him regarding the air strikes. House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) said, “The President did the right thing.”¹⁶⁵ Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) called the strike “...appropriate and just,”

and House Majority Leader Richard K. Armey (R-Tex.) said "...the American people stand united in the face of terrorism."¹⁶⁶ However, there were also critics. Among the most outspoken was Senator Dan Coats (R-Ind.), who called for the President to resign after the admission of his affair.¹⁶⁷ However, even he was careful to not to directly criticize the attack. He said, "The President has been consumed with matters regarding his personal life. It raises questions about whether or not he had the time to devote to this issue, or give the kind of judgment that needed to be given to this issue to call for military action."¹⁶⁸ It appears that Congress will support these types of military action, even in the worst of domestic political turmoil, proving the old axiom that US politics stops at the water's edge.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is solid evidence to support the conclusion that, in limited military strikes, using unmanned systems might offer more advantages than the use of manned aircraft. The use of unmanned system allows officials to keep the operation relatively secret, avoid public statements that might put US credibility and prestige at risk, and limit the risk of American casualties or prisoners. There also appears to be little difference in the public or political support for these operations as compared to strikes using manned systems. However, as in all aspects of military and political affairs, there are trade-offs. First, since little pre-hostilities posturing has to be accomplished, the resolve of the US might be perceived as diminished. This lack of public preparation may cause the public to question the long-term effectiveness of the attack. Furthermore, our adversaries may question our resolve and simply seek shelter to "wait out" the strikes. Additionally, the amount of pre-hostilities debate and coverage might be more limited. If

the strike develops into a full-scale operation, the public and political cohesion might be more vulnerable compared to a case where a more robust pre-hostilities consensus campaign was undertaken. This aspect will receive more detailed coverage in the next chapter.

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Chapter 4

Air War

The last chapter dealt specifically with the difference between the use of manned versus unmanned assets in a strike mission. This chapter will examine the differences between these two systems in a limited war scenario. In order to do this, Operation ALLIED FORCE will be studied as a baseline. This operation had the unique characteristic of being conducted without the use of US/NATO ground forces in a combat role, except for the three soldiers captured “inside” the Macedonian border. Therefore, this case provides an excellent opportunity to study political and public support for “air wars.” This chapter will look at the following aspects of the War on Serbia.

- The reason behind the decision to use only airpower.
- The amount of pre-hostility consensus building by the Administration.
- What the media emphasized in its reporting of the war.
- How the public responded to ALLIED FORCE.
- How the political debate transpired over the course of the war.
- The political constraints placed on the military conduct of the war.
- How the war was viewed from a “just war” perspective.
- The impact of “human shields” on an air war.

At the end of each section there will be a short analysis of the potential impact of conducting this war with unmanned assets. Since this did not happen, it will be strictly hypothetical. In this discussion, every effort has been made to support speculation with historical information. The required use of a conjectural analysis will always leave room

for some to criticize some minor point in the upcoming argument. This disposition should be constrained until a full picture is presented. For it is the purpose of this chapter to discover whether, as with air strikes, the majority of the data shows advantages in using unmanned assets, or whether the information leads one to conclude that there are more disadvantages.

Decision to use airpower alone

The initial decision to rely solely on airpower is significant, particularly in developing a construct from which one can examine how unmanned systems would affect this calculus. In the case of Kosovo, this decision was based on three primary factors. The first was the idea that this action was diplomatic “signaling,” as opposed to a full-blown air war. Second, by restricting the operation to relying solely on airpower the amount of casualties could be limited. Finally, the decision was influenced by the desire to reduce the political risk to the Administration.

The idea of using, or threatening to use force in the diplomatic negotiations with Serbia has roots going back to 1992. On Christmas Eve of that year, President George Bush issued what was known as his “Christmas warning” to President Milosevic. In that statement he warned that NATO would have to respond if Kosovo was attacked.¹⁷⁰ Senator Lieberman (D-Conn.) pointed out that “...President Clinton reinforced that threat as recently as last October [1998]. Milosevic signed a cease-fire agreement in which we again said to him, if you attack Kosovo, we will have to respond with force.”¹⁷¹ Adding conviction to the idea that threatening force could achieve a diplomatic resolution was Operation DELIBERATE FORCE. This operation is commonly credited with being a decisive factor that led to the end of the Bosnian conflict. This is particular poignant

since Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic was also in power during that operation. This reinforced the idea that Milosevic was susceptible to coercion by threatening the use of limited military force.

More proof that this was really intended as a diplomatic signal can be seen in some of the pre-hostilities interactions at the highest levels. In a May 4, 1998, letter, Sandy Berger, the National Security Advisor stated, “We have been firm with both parties that the difficulties in Kosovo cannot be solved through the use of force.”¹⁷² Apparently, the initial opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) was that there was no guarantee that airpower could do it alone. However, there were people who felt they knew Milosevic better than the JCS, and concluded the threat of bombing would make him come to the table.¹⁷³ Congressman DeLay’s (R-Tex.) description of his first meeting with Administration officials is particularly insightful in exposing this mindset. He said, “The first briefing that we had with his Administration, the first briefings, that frankly scared me to death because those briefings with the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff told us this was no big deal, that we were going to bomb for a couple of days, 48 hours, and then stop bombing and Milosevic would come to the table.”¹⁷⁴ In essence we can see a recurring pattern from early 1992 in our dealings with Milosevic. The US continued to pursue diplomatic solutions, clearly holding a posture opposed to Serbia, while using the threat of force to alleviate the stalemate. While a significant portion of the later debate revolves around how the use of force was going to stop the “ethnic cleansing” in Kosovo, the original driver behind the idea of using force was not to stop the Serbians as much as to cause Milosevic to realize the futility of his situation and sign the Rambouillet Accords.

While this background highlights the threatened use of force, it does not identify the reasons for choosing to use only airpower assets. However, if the plan was just to “signal” Milosevic, for approximately 48 hours, that the US was serious about solving the situation, then limiting the amount of casualties was a paramount consideration. Moreover, it was important that the signal be presented in such a way that Milosevic would see US resolve. In this sense, history was on the side of airpower. First, as was pointed out in Chapter 2, lessons from history, however misapplied, have led to the perception that the US is casualty averse. In fact, some officials worried “...that the president’s [sic] previous efforts to restrain military action to keep losses to a minimum has created a public perception that the military has failed if lives are lost.”¹⁷⁵ Therefore, airpower offered the best military solution to limit the amount of risk to our forces. Furthermore, the application of airpower best fit the needs of the Administration. Since the earliest days of airpower the dominant part of theory and doctrine has centered on its ability to have a direct strategic effect. There have also been two other successful air operations waged in order to bring an enemy to the negotiating table. In 1972, during the Vietnam War, the Linebacker II bombing operation was credited with bringing the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table. In 1995, Operation DELIBERATE FORCE was also commonly credited with forcing the acceptance of the Dayton Accords. In the end, the aversion to casualties along with the historical precedents caused additional impetus to employ air assets alone.

Finally, airpower assets were used exclusively in order to limit the political risk. In our present form of government any friction between the legislative and executive branches is often highlighted when US forces are entering a hostile environment.

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this interaction is the Congressional control of the “purse-strings.” If funding is not authorized then military action will become untenable. However, the Wars Powers Act presents additional friction in these circumstances. The basic issue is always how much the President, as Commander-in-Chief, is required to consult with Congress prior to the employment of the military. While the specifics of the War Powers Act and its constitutional arguments is beyond the scope of this discussion, it does present another avenue for Congress to be involved in the debate. In the case of Kosovo, only the Senate voted to authorize the use of air strikes against Yugoslavia. Prior to the war, it voted for Senate Resolution 21:

Authorizing the President of the United States to conduct military air operations and missile strikes against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the President of the United States is authorized to conduct military air operations and missile strikes in cooperation with our NATO allies against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).¹⁷⁶

This resolution was only passed by a vote of 58 to 44. In addition, this exact resolution was voted down in the house four weeks after the bombings started (there will be more on the political debate, which occurred during the war, later in the paper.) However, in the Senate debate, four primary arguments developed. First, there was the acknowledgment that the use of ground troops was inherently more dangerous, and support for such operations would not be forthcoming. Second, the members that opposed the authorization argued that the military objectives simply could not be met by air forces. Third, and in a similar light, was the idea that risk to our forces, albeit air, was too great to use them in such an action. Finally was the idea that we must support our troops going into harms way.

On the eve of the air attacks, after reassurance by the Administration that the conflict would not involve ground troops, members of the Senate remained quite concerned. The authorization adopted specified only air strikes. However, some members felt that this was not enough. Senator Stephens (R-Alaska), who voted against the authorization, stated, “We [the Senate] do not have a prohibition against the use of ground forces, and I told the President I would support this resolution if it did.... I seriously regret that we have not put a parameter around this war so it will prevent the use of our forces on the ground. I believe we are coming close to starting World War III. At least I know we are starting a process that is almost going to be never-ending, unless it never starts.”¹⁷⁷ Other senators concluded that the eventual use of ground troops would not enable them to support this authorization. As Senator Thurmond (R-S.C.) proclaimed, “I rise today in opposition to the pending resolution.... It was the successful Croat ground offensive against Bosnian Serbs just before the 1995 Dayton agreement that forced Serbia's compliance with the peace agreement. Likewise, to resolve the problem NATO faces today, ground force will probably be required in Kosovo.” It seems that the members of Congress were acutely aware of two US public opinion concerns: protracted conflict and US casualties. There were two additional points related to this issue. First, there was never a mention in the debate that ground troops should be used to stop the “ethnic cleansing.” Second, there were not any zealots claiming that airpower alone would succeed. The supporters of the resolution merely claimed that the Senate needed to support the objectives of the President.

This concern over casualties limited the authorization to air strikes alone. However, there was also grave concern over US casualties from air operations. As was pointed out in the debate:

The airstrikes proposed by NATO, if Milosevic does not relent and sign on to the peace agreement, will represent a very serious commitment. If NATO carries out these airstrikes, U.S. pilots will confront a well-trained and motivated air defense force that is capable of shooting down NATO aircraft. Serbian air defense troops are knowledgeable about U.S. tactics from their experience in Bosnia, are protected by mountainous terrain and difficult weather conditions, and are well-prepared and equipped to endure a sustained bombardment. Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael Ryan told the Senate Armed Services Committee last week that casualties are a “distinct possibility,” and Marine Commandant General Charles Krulak said. “It is going to be tremendously dangerous.”¹⁷⁸

As a follow-up, Senator Hutchinson (R-Ark.) argued, “We all know that the probability is high that there will be the loss of American lives. So this afternoon I did a lot of soul searching. I thought about my 20-year-old son, Joshua. If it were him going in, could I in my mind justify sending him in....I believe stability in the Balkans is not a satisfactory answer.”¹⁷⁹ In both these arguments the proposed use of airpower did not, in and of itself, limit the discussion of casualties. Furthermore, that discussion was almost exclusively devoted to US casualties.

Finally, the argument was made that we needed to support the actions of the President, NATO, and our troops. This became particularly important since, as Senator Stevens (R-Alaska) stated, “I looked in the eye of a President that had already made up his mind on the air war.” Furthermore, it became apparent that the Administration was not going to alter its decision to use force, regardless of the vote.¹⁸⁰ A voice for the majority stated that, “The President is out of options, and we must support him and the aircrews who will carry out his orders. But I am under no illusions that airstrikes will fix the Kosovo problem. The best I hope for is that the airstrikes will bring Milosevic back to

the table to accept a NATO-brokered agreement for a peaceful transition in Kosovo.”¹⁸¹ Others felt that “...the Senate must show that we back our troops one hundred percent. Our airmen have excellent training and the best equipment in the world. They will have the participation of our NATO allies. And they will have the prayers and support of the American people--who recognize their heroism.”¹⁸²

These discussions illustrate the different character of debate compared to the case when airpower is used in a single strike role. In that scenario there is little political debate. In the *ex post facto* air strike debate we see the tendency to “unite at the waters edge.” However, in a scenario that airpower is proposed to be exclusively used for a longer period of time the consensus is harder to obtain and the debate more vocal.

Using Unmanned Assets

At first glance the decision to use manned versus unmanned assets seems quite obvious. The same type of basic calculus used in the decision to conduct strikes with unmanned assets still applies. However, there are other considerations that must be accounted for when the period of operations is substantially longer. First, how does the use of unmanned assets affect the decision to use airpower alone? Second, how does the ability to limit US casualties affect the decision? Finally, how does the nature of the political debate to support the actions differ when unmanned assets are used?

The use of unmanned assets may increase the desire to use an air only option. As was pointed out in Chapter 3 the use of unmanned assets offers some benefits when used in that type of role. They are able to limit the casualties, eliminate the possibility of POWs, and can be planned in a more secure manner. Obviously these benefits would match nicely with a Kosovo type operation. From a non-technical standpoint there

appears to be little that would keep the Administration from choosing an “air only” option when unmanned assets are used. Of course, there would probably be a host of questions pertaining to the ability of the unmanned systems to accomplish the specific mission tasks. Nevertheless, that is not the focus of the paper. We will assume that the platforms are capable of sustained and effective operations.

In terms of limiting the casualties the use of unmanned assets has a decided advantage. It essentially eliminates friendly casualties. However, there is another aspect of this situation that needs to be explored. Typically political leaders will seek the advice from military leaders prior to action. The primary focus of this interaction is, theoretically, to make sure the objectives are clear, the military is capable of accomplishing its assigned objectives, and to determine the price in “blood and treasure” (to use an old cliché). However, a fundamental aspect of this interaction is now missing. While cost in money and equipment is an important facet, it pales in comparison to the cost of human lives. Certainly a senior officer who argues against a particular military action because it is likely to kill tens, or hundreds of US airmen carries far more weight than one who claims it will cost tens to hundreds of UCAVs. One could imagine this being carried so far that it essentially eliminates any real military consultation prior to the decision to use force.

Finally, the nature of political debate will change significantly with the use of unmanned assets. Of the four key arguments mentioned in the Senate debate, unmanned assets will cause one to disappear, the relevance of two to be reduced, with only one maintaining its importance. First, the debate over risk to our airmen is eliminated. Second, the idea of “supporting our troops” will have less meaning than before. While a

vast number of the politicians made specific reference to supporting our troops, it clearly meant our “troops in harms way”. After all, these are really the troops we are trying to support with the political vote and public support. This should be nothing new to the reader. Our entire military culture has been built around the “shooter” and the support elements. The focus of this system has always been to give the “warfighter” the support they need to accomplish the mission. Of course, when those support elements are deployed to hostile locations we expand that concept to the entire unit. This is quite obvious when looking at the Senate debate and the actions of political leaders. The only airmen mentioned to be at risk were the pilots. Additionally, when Secretary Cohen and members of Congress visited the “troops” they made a specific point of visiting the pilots in Aviano, Italy. Furthermore, they made a specific point to visit with the combat aircrews. The point is that politicians, as well as the public and military, view supporting the troops in conflict as supporting the “troops that are in harms way” – not the entire military establishment. Therefore, the debate will focus on the idea of supporting the President’s actions, as was stated in Chapter 3, to “unite at the water’s edge.” Third, the debate about airpower not being able to meet these types of objectives will be significantly reduced. Regardless of lessons learned from the Air War Over Serbia (AWOS) Study, the fact remains that we won the war. Therefore, politicians may argue about the time required to execute such an operation, but airpower’s ability to achieve victory in such a scenario will be debated less. Finally, the idea of the absolute difference between the introduction of ground troops and the use of airpower will maintain its same relevance. In a situation such as Kosovo, the use of manned assets at least prepared the political leaders for the very real possibility of casualties. However, the members of the

Senate were not even willing to think about the use of ground troops. In future conflicts with unmanned assets, the possibility of casualties will be dismissed. As a logical extension, one can assume it will be even more difficult to gain support for ground force employment.

In the final analysis there are a couple of main issues that appear. Most importantly we see the potential for fissures to develop in the unity of our leadership. By eliminating the “blood” aspect of the calculus, the issue turns to “treasure.” As evidence of the potential problems created by this situation, one can look at the increased operations tempo of the late 1990s, which finally caused the Service chiefs to complain about the lack of resources. It appears that fiscal arguments only mattered when it reached the point of creating *critical shortages*. Unless an operation is likely to create a critical shortage, there might be a decreased ability for military leadership to influence the political will. Of course, we have not discussed the advice that a military leader will undoubtedly offer in regard to strategy and operational capabilities. This aspect will be left open for discussion in subsequent sections. Another issue that presents itself is the apparent difference in the nature of the political debate. If the majority of the contentious issues are reduced, the debate may transform and other lines of argumentation may fill the void. The initial Senate debate offers some insight. One might see the debate centering on the financial cost. However, in the initial Senate debate monetary cost was only questioned twice. It does not appear that this resonated with a large number of the members. Another issue that might surface is the issue of collateral damage, specifically the possibility that innocent civilians might get killed. Still, in the initial Kosovo debate, it was addressed only once.

In the final analysis, it appears that there are two possible course of action. First, the elimination of a large number of contentious issues might cause Congress to offer greater support for the President's actions. More than likely, the limited risk will allow Congress to sit on the sidelines, waiting for the opportunity to critique the mission. Either of these situations opens up the potential for fissures to develop in the national leadership. In the first case, if Congress offers support to the policy we certainly will not see the same devotion to the "heroism" of our troops. The debate over their risk has been eliminated. In the latter case, the decision to sit on the sidelines may signal our nation's lack of resolve. Moreover, failure to get a "buy in" from Congressional leaders will keep the debate alive during hostilities. What effect this debate will have is open for speculation, and will be examined in subsequent sections. What is certain is that it will permeate all facets of our military employment.

The amount of pre-hostility consensus building by the Administration

In such an unclear and unprecedented military action, one would think there would be a large pre-hostilities media campaign to generate support. However, this was not the case in the war against Serbia. In the months leading up to the crisis President Clinton only talked about the situation occasionally. A *USA TODAY* review of Clinton's public comments leading up the air strikes found that he "...made one full-scale speech and one Saturday radio address devoted entirely to Kosovo."¹⁸³ Furthermore, this apparent lack of interest was identified early by members of the Congress. At the end of July 1998, Senator Roberts (R-Kans.) sighted news articles about the deteriorating situation in Kosovo and urged the President to make a stand. He said, "This whole issue has yet to be addressed by the President...yet, we are backing into a situation with 'military observers'

and with contingency plans that could involve thousands more. I call for the President to ...outline the objectives and the exit strategy.”¹⁸⁴ Senator McCain (R-Ariz.) commented that he simply “...didn’t lay out the argument.”¹⁸⁵ Essentially, as historian Michael Beschloss points out, “...there are very few signs that he spent the time in private or in public to build the kind of support for this that you would like to see before this kind of engagement.”¹⁸⁶

The reason for the apparent lack of a media campaign is based on two primary factors. First, White House aides said that a more high-profile media campaign would have hurt the diplomatic efforts underway.¹⁸⁷ They claimed that the Serbs would have interpreted it as “saber-rattling,” which would have been counterproductive.¹⁸⁸ The other factor is that the Administration still held the view that it was going to be a short, limited military action. As Ivo Daalder, former National Security Council Advisor to Clinton and now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, stated, “They assumed - and I think their PR [press relations] strategy is based on the assumption - that a bit of bombing was going to be sufficient to get us to the bargaining table and to get us a new negotiation.”¹⁸⁹

The fact that there was not a large-scale effort certainly was not an oversight by the Administration. As one commentator noted, “For a president famous for his reliance on polling, President Clinton is taking a huge political risk.”¹⁹⁰ Even President Clinton acknowledged prior the hostilities that most Americans could not find Kosovo on a map.¹⁹¹ Certainly, this is some of the impetus behind his speech on March 23rd, which was “...an emotional, almost folksy speech, he pleaded with the public and Congress to embrace his decision to send U.S. pilots on a risky mission there ‘to stand up to brutality

and the killing of innocent people’.”¹⁹² However, even after this emphatic speech the sentiment of the public altered little.

Unmanned Assets

It seems inconceivable that the use of unmanned assets could in any way have increased the pre-hostilities PR campaign. The situation in Kosovo, which involved the risk of US casualties, the first military action of NATO in 50 years on questionable grounds, and strains on US / Russian relations, did not excite a robust media campaign. How then could the elimination of risk of US casualties do anything but decrease the PR campaign by some degree? In fact, we have already seen that the pre-hostilities coverage for air strikes was decreased in operations involving unmanned assets. It appears to be a reasonable assumption that the same is true for larger scale operations.

The problem is closely related to the previous section. If the use of unmanned assets can cause fissures in the leadership, the lack of a robust PR campaign might highlight these problems. The inability of the political leadership, military leadership, and national elite to publicly debate the issues and consequences prior to the initiation of sustained military operations will add little to the ability to build political consensus, and hence support.

How the public responded to ALLIED FORCE.

An examination of the public support of this “air war” will establish a baseline for “air wars” and note how events affected this support. This section will go beyond the shallow argument that more press was given to manned assets versus unmanned assets. That fact is well documented. It is hoped by fully examining the critical aspects of the

media coverage and its interaction with polls, a broader understanding of public opinion and the context in which it was established can be discovered. In this effort, one will find a fairly lengthy discussion of public opinion during ALLIED FORCE. This is an unfortunate necessity, as the recency of the conflict has not allowed the author the benefit of others analyses. The goal is to build a representative view of public opinion and a more realistic appreciation of how unmanned assets will cause changes.

Figure 1 shows the public support for some of the key issues. One should note the gaps in the figure represent periods of time that specific questions were not repeated. Additionally, some of the questions changed slightly during the period. For example, the line representing “air strikes” was in response to one of the following questions:

- “As you know, last week the military alliance of Western countries called NATO, launched air and missile attacks against Serbian military targets in Yugoslavia. Do you favor or oppose the United States being part of that military action?”¹⁹³
- -or- “As you may know, the military alliance of Western countries called NATO, launched air and missile attacks against Serbian military targets in Yugoslavia. Do you favor or oppose the United States being part of that military action?”¹⁹⁴

The line for “ground troops” represents responses to numerous questions. These questions vary in whether they stipulate that ground troops should be introduced if “air and missile strikes are not effective” or whether they should be introduced based on “thinking about the current situation.”¹⁹⁵ The graph represents the higher response given when the two questions were asked at the same time. It is interesting to note that the highest point is 52 percent on April 13-14, however, that was in response to the “not effective” question.¹⁹⁶ When the “given the current situation” question was asked the favorable response fell to 43 percent.¹⁹⁷

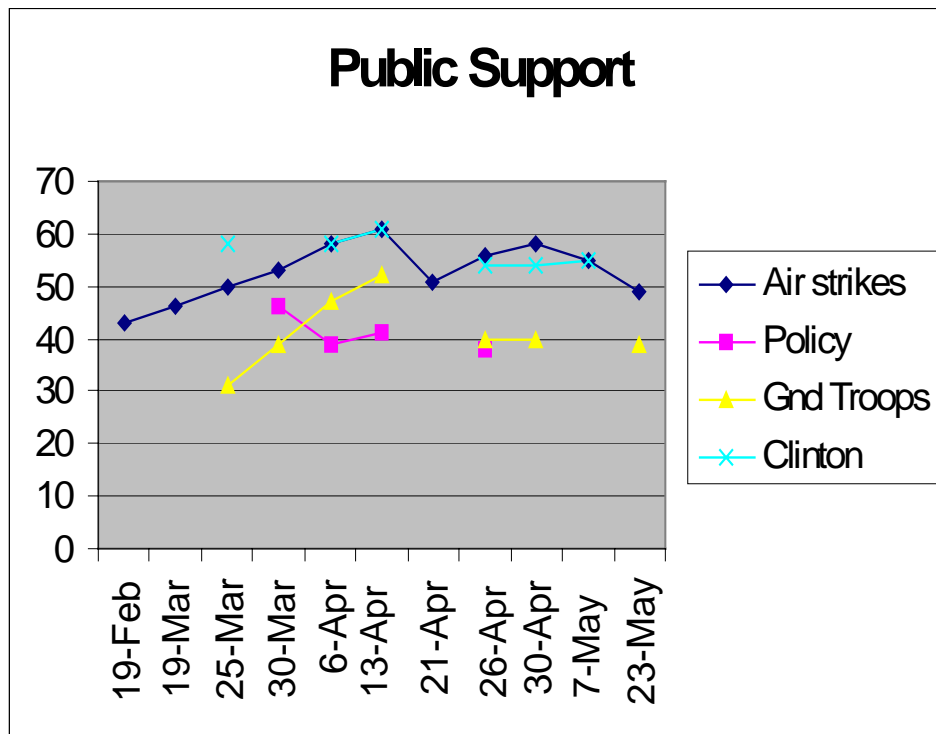


Figure 1. Public Support Data for the Kosovo Conflict

The other questions remained relatively constant during the process. The question regarding “policy” was in response to the question, “From what you have heard or read, do you think the Clinton Administration has a clear and well-thought-out policy on the Kosovo situation, or don’t you think so?”¹⁹⁸ Finally, the line for “Clinton” is in response to, “Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Clinton is handling the situation in Kosovo?” The war will now be examined in two parts. The first half representing a

period of time where public support was on the rise, and the second half represented a period of decreasing support. In each half an assessment of the public support, significant events, and the corresponding media coverage will be explored. The goal is to develop some logical explanations for the changes in public opinion.

First Half of the War

This section will examine the public support and media coverage of the conflict from the pre-hostilities phase through 13 April 1999. This date was chosen because public support continued to rise, reaching a zenith at the end of this time. An early poll, taken shortly after President Clinton announced on 13 February that, “NATO has authorized air strikes if Serbia fails to comply with its previous commitments to withdraw forces and fails to support a peace accord”¹⁹⁹, showed a minority supporting this measure. Support for air strikes was at 43 percent, while those opposed registered at 45 percent.²⁰⁰ Furthermore, only 42 percent of those polled were able to accurately place Kosovo in the Balkans.²⁰¹ In a related finding, the poll found that among those who knew where Kosovo was, there was a higher support for using ground troops in a peacekeeping role.²⁰² Unfortunately, the data does not specifically distinguish the attitudes towards air strikes between the two groups. However, it appears that there is some correlation between familiarity and support.

Another poll conducted prior to the war, 19-20 March, also found tepid support for air strikes.²⁰³ The support for strikes was at 46 percent, while 43 percent were against them.²⁰⁴ The poll also noted that the public was not highly attentive to the Kosovo situation. Specifically, only 36 percent claimed that they were following the situation closely.²⁰⁵ However, of those following the situation closely, 58 percent supported the

strikes.²⁰⁶ This data seems to support the previous finding that there is a correlation between familiarity and support. Additionally, it seems to indicate that bringing an issue to the public's attention might result in increased support for military action.

Shortly before and after the initiation of hostilities there was an effort made to gain the support of the public. In a review of the print media during this time, one finds the Administration making numerous arguments consistent with historical reasons and justifications for going to war. There was a villainization of the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic. As President Clinton said, "What if someone had listened to Winston Churchill and stood up to Adolf Hitler earlier?"²⁰⁷ However, Secretary Cohen stressed, "NATO forces are not attacking the people of Yugoslavia. They are attacking the military forces that are responsible for the killing and carnage in Kosovo."²⁰⁸ NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana also added, "NATO is not waging war against Yugoslavia...We have no quarrel with the people of Yugoslavia, who, for too long, have been isolated in Europe because of the policies of their government."²⁰⁹ The Administration also presented the idea that the war could spread. Clinton said, "Look at the map – this is a conflict with no natural boundaries...If the conflict continues, it could force thousands of refugees to Albania to the south or Macedonia. Fighting could engulf those nations. It could draw in even Greece and Turkey."²¹⁰ Additionally, economic reasons were mentioned as a factor. Clinton claimed that, "If we have learned anything after the Cold War...it is that if our country is going to be prosperous and secure, we need a Europe that is safe, secure, free, united, a good partner."²¹¹ Finally, the humanitarian issue was presented. Basically, the claim was that a failure to act "...after

all that has been said here...will be interpreted by Mr. Milosevic as a license to continue to kill.”²¹²

Nevertheless, after this effort to inspire the nation, one does not see the historical “rally around the flag effect.” In fact, “...public support for US involvement in the Yugoslavian conflict...[was] at the low end of the historical spectrum when compared to public opinion about other US foreign interventions of the past two decades.”²¹³ The poll conducted on 25 March confirmed this. In this poll, 50 percent of Americans favored participation in the air strikes, while 39 percent opposed them.

However, it is more important to discover “why” the public was not moved to support the President as has occurred in the past. While the Administration’s arguments seem to support the traditional values of the public, there were numerous arguments presented that worked against public opinion. The first was the potential danger presented by the Yugoslavian air defense system. Kenneth Bacon, the Pentagon spokesman, said allied pilots would have to contend with a “fairly substantial and redundant” air defense system.²¹⁴ Furthermore, he stated, “Yugoslavia’s air defenses are well-trained, and well-equipped, although their equipment is somewhat older, and...may not have been as well maintained as they would like.”²¹⁵ The threat may have worked against the public’s willingness to accept casualties in this scenario. After all, 42 percent thought the goal was not worth any American casualties, and 36 percent said it was worth only a few.²¹⁶ However, on 25 March only 14 percent were “very” confident that the US would be able to accomplish “...its goals with very few or no American casualties.”²¹⁷ This suggests a low willingness to accept casualties, but exactly where the breaking point resides is difficult to determine. A 1995 poll, which had not been updated, found that

“...support for US involvement in peacekeeping activities in the Balkans largely evaporating when respondents were presented with the possibility that 25 Americans soldiers might be killed.”²¹⁸ The final argument working against public opinion was the perceived mismatch between the objectives and the means to carry them out. The news was inundated with reports of reputable “military experts” claiming that airpower would not succeed. There were also several senior officials, besides the Senators mentioned previously, that reiterated this conviction. Why was there no rally effect? It appears little was presented to the American public to cause a significant change in opinion.

A poll conducted from 30-31 March suggested that there was little change in the attitude of the American people. In this poll 53 percent favored the attacks (up three percent) and 41 percent were opposed. This is surprising in two respects. First, the loss of an F-117 seemed to have had little effect on the overall public support. One might wonder if the loss of an aircraft, not the pilot, would create a “Pearl Harbor” effect, mentioned in Chapter 2. It did not. Second, one might have expected that the loss would have changed the opinion of how capable NATO would be in accomplishing its objectives with little or no casualties - it did not.²¹⁹ A minor change noted during this period of time was that the public had become “...cynical about the effectiveness of an air war.”²²⁰ In particular, there was a “...drop in public confidence that the US can accomplish its objectives through NATO air attacks, from 44 percent ... to 41 percent.”²²¹ Certainly these minor opinion shifts were affected by the news of the continuing and mounting humanitarian crisis. This shift was particularly acute as the access to Yugoslavia was becoming severely restricted to the Western press.²²² This limited reports from Serbia, and placed emphasis on the refugees. One Serbian, an

economic journalist, an open opponent of Milosevic, and someone who spent several hours every day watching and listening to western media reports, commented that the western press was presenting a very skewed presentation of the facts.²²³ She claimed that, “You wouldn’t know that there is an Albanian army fighting against the Serbs.”²²⁴ It appears this coverage may have allowed NATO’s public relations campaign to gain momentum. As *The Gallup Organization* noted:

As thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees stream across the border into Macedonia and other neighboring countries, 64% say the NATO air strikes have made the situation in Yugoslavia worse. However, 67% blame the Serbian government’s actions for causing the problem, and 58% believe the Serbs have been using all possible means, including ‘ethnic cleansing’ and mass killings, to remove the ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. *Two out of three American polled believe that alone justifies the NATO air strikes*, along with the possibility that the Serb aggression could spread to neighboring countries [emphasis mine].²²⁵

During the period of time between 31 March and 6-7 April, when the next poll was conducted, three US soldiers were captured.²²⁶ This caused considerable publicity. US Army General Clark said, “We don’t like it...We don’t like the way they are being treated and we have a long memory about these kinds of things.”²²⁷ Secretary Cohen claimed the soldiers had been “illegally detained.”²²⁸ British Foreign Minister Robin Cook denounced the action, saying, “There is no possible justification for using soldiers who have been captured for propaganda purposes...It is explicitly barred by international agreement, which once again, President Milosevic is plainly breaking.”²²⁹ These condemnations were followed with numerous news reports about the captured soldiers. The dreaded symbol of war, the yellow-ribbon, soon began to be displayed in communities across the country.²³⁰ Additionally, there continued to be an extraordinary amount of coverage on the plight of the refugees. These events certainly affected the results of the polls. Results showed that public support had risen to 58 percent, up five

percent.²³¹ However, this increase in public support was not associated with a corresponding increase in those that thought the policy was “clear and well thought out.”²³² Furthermore, 41 percent said that the NATO bombing had been a failure, while 37 percent said it was a success (the rest said it was too soon to tell).²³³ It appears the human tragedy was the driving factor behind the increase in support, not the perceived operational effectiveness.

The poll taken from 13-14 April showed the greatest amount of support registered during the campaign. Perhaps one of the most shocking revelations of this poll was the realization that the American public was now following the Kosovo situation closely. In the poll over 80 percent said they were following the events closely.²³⁴ This is a sharp rise from the 36 percent mark registered in mid March.²³⁵ Additionally, the poll found that support for the air strikes had risen to 61 percent, up three percent.²³⁶ Support for the policy had also risen 3 percent, up to 41 percent.²³⁷ It also revealed that 61 percent of the public supported the President’s actions in Kosovo, also up three percent.²³⁸ Finally, the support for the introduction of ground troops stood at 52 percent, a four-point rise.²³⁹ During this period of time the primary news about the Kosovo conflict pertained to the plight of the refugees. There were reports about the 2,200-man US Expeditionary Unit sent to aid in the humanitarian crisis.²⁴⁰ The *New York Times* reported that the relief effort had become “overwhelmed” at the time.²⁴¹ The military base at Guantanamo was preparing to receive up to 20,000 expelled Kosovar Albanians.²⁴² At the same time some alarming reports started to circulate that Milosevic was sealing off the borders in an attempt to limit the exodus of refugees.²⁴³ One report stated that “tens of thousands” of refugees waiting to cross the border vanished in the middle of the night.²⁴⁴ At the time,

NATO officials reported concern that blocking the flow of refugees and forcing their return into the province was an attempt to ward off bombing attacks.²⁴⁵ There were also reports of continued atrocities in Kosovo. Among them there were reports of Kosovar Albanians being used as “...human shields against gunfire from anti-government rebels.”²⁴⁶ Overall, the coverage of the humanitarian crisis was the main focus. According to Gallup, “It would appear that the highly publicized plight of the refugees is a significant factor behind the increasing support for US and NATO intervention.”²⁴⁷

There were some events and associated media coverage that should have had a negative impact on public opinion. On April 7 the media reported a NATO “accident of war” in which our bombs demolished two residential areas killing at least seven civilians and wounding an additional 50.²⁴⁸ British Air Commodore David Wilby gave a fairly typical military reason for the accident. He stated, “Despite our meticulous and careful pre-attack planning the law of statistics will at some stage go against us and we will be exposed to a technical defect.”²⁴⁹ Then on April 8 a small amount of press was devoted to the Serbian claims of 10 dead civilians in Pristina as a result of NATO bombings.²⁵⁰ Additionally, reports of General Clark requesting a dramatic increase in firepower circulated.²⁵¹ Together, one might assume this would signal the start of increased involvement and higher total cost. However, these events did not generate a large amount of press coverage.

Unmanned Assets

The following section will discuss how the use of unmanned assets could have affected public opinion during the first half of the war. It was seen in the pre-hostilities section that the Administration did a poor job of building consensus. This caused the

debate during the opening portion of the war to focus more on “why” we were fighting as opposed to “how” we were fighting, quite a contrast to the Gulf War. In a “why” debate, the estimates of cost and benefits are the primary concerns. In this respect, unmanned assets can alleviate some of the fears of US casualties and hence debate regarding human costs. Furthermore, there seems to be a strong correlation between the 42 percent that thought the operation was not worth any casualties and the 39 percent that were opposed to the bombings at the beginning of the war.²⁵² It is quite probable that support would have risen had unmanned assets been available. An additional benefit might result. Prior to the war, airpower had never been solely responsible for the defeat of an enemy. Obviously the public shared this opinion; the data showed less than 45 percent of the people thought airpower alone would work.²⁵³ However, Kosovo proved this legacy to be wrong. By extension, if the public thought the chance of success was great (benefit) and the chance of losing US lives less (cost) one could expect there to be a significant rise in support of the operation. In essence, the “rally around the flag” effect would reemerge.

The problem with this situation is that the public will expect that the use of unmanned assets will mean *zero* US casualties. In Kosovo those were not the expectations, the majority of the public expected at least a few losses. Therefore, when the loss of an F-117 and the capture of three soldiers occurred, it came as no great surprise to most Americans. One expects to take losses in a war. Furthermore, the limited amount of collateral damage during this period, Yugoslavia put the number at 17 civilian deaths, are what the other side can expect. Now let us assume that the Kosovo conflict was being conducted solely by unmanned assets. A shootdown of an unmanned

asset would probably not generate much coverage, but there would be considerable coverage on the soldiers. The expectations of the public run counter to the situation. They expected airpower to handle the conflict at a cost of zero casualties: they find three POWs. Would this shatter support, certainly not. However, it would inevitably lead to an even more intense investigation of the circumstances of the capture, and questioning of the military's handling of the situation.

Another related factor that cannot be overlooked is the potential for the “why” debate to be limited. As mentioned above the use of unmanned assets might allow a higher level of support at the beginning of the conflict. However, one cannot confuse salesmanship with consensus. The ability to ease the fears of the public does not mean that they believe in the cause. Nor does it mean they will maintain their support throughout the struggle. As proof one can look at the *Gallup* finding that showed it was the atrocities that convinced the public for the need to bomb, not a revelation in the ability to carry out the mission without casualties, or for that matter successfully.²⁵⁴ In fact, at that time 64 percent thought air strikes made the situation worse.²⁵⁵ There is potentially a propensity for leaders to view unmanned assets as a means to a quick and cheap victory. Certainly this is within the realm of possibilities. However, just as in Kosovo, pre-hostility predictions and reality often are not the same. In the case of using unmanned assets, the weakened consensus of the public might not be able to handle such broken expectations.

Second half of the war

While the initial half of the conflict saw the public support continue to rise, the later part saw the erosion of support. This section will examine public opinion and the significant events that took place in the later part of the conflict. Since this encompasses

a long period of time, the discussions will be broken down into the periods associated with the polling periods, shown in Figure 1. It will be shown that concern over collateral damage, the Kosovar Albanian humanitarian crisis, and the ineffectiveness of airpower to meet the objectives were the dominant issues. Additionally, concerns over the negotiation process and possible use of ground forces round out the major areas for concern.

13 April through 26 April

The first period was between 13 and 26 April. The most important aspect of this period is that it registered the largest decrease in public support, and signaled the start of a trend that would lead to public support for air strikes falling below 50 percent by the end of the war.²⁵⁶ However, the 13 to 26 April period did not see a constant decline in public support. There was a dip during the 21 April poll; it found only 51 percent of the public supported air strikes.²⁵⁷ Unfortunately, overall support for the air operation was the only question asked on this date, leaving one to guess on attitudes towards the other questions. For the 26 April poll, support for air strikes registered at 56 percent and the support for the policy was at 38 percent, down from 41 percent from 13-14 April.²⁵⁸ The support for the introduction of ground troops was also down to 40 percent from 56 percent (13-14 April).²⁵⁹ Finally, approval for President Clinton's handling of the situation had dwindled to 54 percent, a seven percent decrease from the 13-14 April poll.²⁶⁰

During this period there were a number of events that certainly affected the sentiments of the public. In general, the greatest media coverage was devoted to three broad categories. The first category incorporated stories of collateral damage. Second

were stories that showed the inadequacy of the bombing campaign up to that point in time. Third were the continued stories of the humanitarian crisis; the most alarming of which were reports of collateral damage that resulted in numerous civilian casualties. The first event that captured the media came on 13 April. On this date, an attack on the Juzna Morava River Railroad Bridge resulted in the destruction of a train that happened to be crossing the bridge at the time of the attack.²⁶¹ Yugoslav sources would claim it took the lives of 14 people. Additional news was generated by two factors. First, it was reported that the pilot actually circled back for a second attack.²⁶² Also, the video of the attack was made public. Certainly, repeated press analysis of this video at slow motion gave one the impression that significantly more time and information was available to the pilot than was true in reality. Next, a 15 April NATO attack on a convoy near Djakovica, in southern Kosovo claimed the lives of 64 civilian refugees.²⁶³ This story generated an enormous amount of press coverage. What made matters worse was the conflicting information coming out of NATO. Initially, General Clark denied the incident, leveling accusations at the Serbians.²⁶⁴ He later retracted those charges and admitted NATO's role in the bombing. In an unusual move, NATO broadcast a taped interview of the American pilot that supposedly took part in the attack.²⁶⁵ Of course, the situation became less clear when Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said that there were actually two attacks and the interviewed pilot was not responsible for either.²⁶⁶ Bacon claimed he "...could not explain the NATO rendition."²⁶⁷ However, what is clear is that NATO and the US wanted to portray the difficulty our pilots had in accomplishing this dangerous task. Secretary Cohen reiterated that the pilots were traveling at 400-500 miles per hour, "...having to make split-second determinations under very extraordinary

circumstances where they are being fired at by triple-A and surface-to-air missile.”²⁶⁸ This is also where initial questions were raised about the NATO 15,000 foot altitude restriction. In response, Lieutenant General Short, Combined Force Air Component Commander (CFACC), eased the altitude restriction.²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, numerous articles and Op-Eds continued to claim that such attacks were causing NATO to lose its moral authority. They pointed out that the Allies were attacking and killing the people that they should have been protecting.²⁷⁰ Finally, on the 23rd, there were reports of more civilian casualties as a result of attack on a Serbian TV station.²⁷¹

The second major story line was the fact that the NATO bombing campaign was not successful. Initially it was reported that NATO lacked sufficient forces to accomplish the mission. Plans had surfaced that the Pentagon was working on the approval of 300 additional aircraft for the “air war.”²⁷² There was a request to call up as many as 33,000 reservists.²⁷³ Army Apache helicopters were deployed to the theater, the first arriving on April 21.²⁷⁴ Other reports expressed the US desire to impose a sea blockade on the Yugoslavian oil supply.²⁷⁵ Of course, all these actions were interpreted as stemming from the deficiency of the current strategy and the need to apply more pressure on Milosevic’s regime. Finally, after 28 days of bombing, the Pentagon acknowledged that the air war was not deterring Serbian forces from attacking Kosovar Albanians.²⁷⁶ Furthermore, an article on the front page of the 26 April *Washington Post* claimed, “If anything, the man President Clinton calls ‘Europe’s last dictator’ is more solidly entrenched in power now than when NATO bombs first began to rain on his country, according to Yugoslav political analysts.”²⁷⁷ There is little doubt that the majority of the media presented the view that NATO strategy was not working. The only bright side to

the news was the apparent success of the NATO 50-year anniversary summit held from 23 to 25 April. The meeting was reported to have helped increase the resolve for the continuation of the air war.²⁷⁸

The final story line was the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Refugees told stories of the “...methodical attacks by Milosevic's forces that cleared out a 10-mile-by-12-mile area.”²⁷⁹ This was particularly disturbing, as it was only a week since President Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia had announced that he had halted offensive military operations in Kosovo.²⁸⁰ There were also reports that Serb forces had closed the border for the second time. Finally, once the border was reopened, reports indicated the violence was among the worst seen up to that point. As Diane Johnson, a sexual violence specialist with the International Rescue Committee said, “It's a free-for-all over there (in Kosovo) right now. The violence is increasing...I have been hearing more and more reports of serious rape going on. Women don't make that up.”²⁸¹ A related story was circulated that the Western leaders had vowed to bring Serbian leaders responsible for the “slaughterhouse” in Kosovo before an international war crimes tribunal.²⁸²

26 April through 7 May

The next period of time to examine is from 26 April until 7 May 1999. During this time two polls were taken. However, the poll results were almost identical and are combined here to represent a fairly consistent period of public support. The poll conducted on 30 April found the support for the air strikes was at 58 percent, which was a three percent rise.²⁸³ The support for sending ground troops remained at 40 percent and the approval for President Clinton's handling remained constant at 54 percent.²⁸⁴ The 7 May poll showed similar results. The approval for the air strikes dropped three points to

55 percent.²⁸⁵ Support for the President's handling of the situation remained relatively constant at 55 percent.²⁸⁶ It should be noted that policy approval was not available for either of these polls and the question regarding ground troops was not asked in the 7 May poll. However, there were other significant findings in the 7 May poll. It was discovered that 24 percent of the public thought the air strikes had been too aggressive, which was about the same percentage that thought they had not been aggressive enough, 27 percent.²⁸⁷ Another 44 percent thought that the level of air strikes had been about right.²⁸⁸ Lastly, 48 percent of Americans favored a cease-fire to negotiate course of action.²⁸⁹

The news about Kosovo during this period focused on four main issues. First, there was the continued assessment that the "air war" was not working. Second, there was increased news about the possibility for a negotiated settlement. Third, there were the continued stories about the human suffering and problems of the refugees. Finally, there were reports of the continuing collateral damage and suffering of the Serbian civilian population brought about by the NATO attacks. The reports about the poor showing of the air campaign focused on a number of issues. There were numerous reports about the broadening of the conflict in order to force Milosevic to capitulate. These included the authorization and call-up of the reserves,²⁹⁰ and the plans to send 300 additional aircraft to support ALLIED FORCE.²⁹¹ The Air Force implemented measures that did not allow airmen with critical skills to depart the service.²⁹² Additionally, NATO increased the tempo of its operations to 600 sorties a day.²⁹³ The increased scope of targeting included numerous "dual-use" targets such as the electrical power grid.²⁹⁴ Reports also circulated about the "problems" of the military. There were two Apache crashes around this period.

The first occurred on 26 April, resulting in only minor injuries to the crew.²⁹⁵ The second occurred on 5 May, killing two servicemen.²⁹⁶ This led to questions about the utility of the Apache in Kosovo.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, it was also reported that the military was starting to run low on some of its “high-tech” weapons.²⁹⁸ Finally, the attempts to halt the Serbian operations in Kosovo were not working. On 28 April, General Clark told reporters, “If you actually added up what’s there on any given day, you might actually find that he’s [Milosevic] strengthened his forces in there [Kosovo]. And that’s going to be a phenomenon until we can further cut the lines of supply and go more intensively against his forces.”²⁹⁹

The second focus of the reports was the continuing efforts to negotiate a settlement. In these efforts the Russians played a key role. At the end of the NATO summit President Clinton agreed in a telephone conversation with President Yeltsin to continue personal contacts in an effort to find a solution for the Kosovo conflict.³⁰⁰ These contacts led Russia to send Victor Chernomyrdin, a former Russian Prime Minister, to aid in negotiations.³⁰¹ Reports continued to show progress between the US and Russian positions. On 7 May, the *Washington Post* reported that NATO had reached agreement on a set of principles to resolve the Kosovo situation. These included establishing an international peacekeeping force and offering Belgrade continued sovereignty over the province.³⁰² Further optimism resulted from a successful trip by the Reverend Jessie Jackson. In a trip to Kosovo, he and other religious leaders were able to gain the release of the three American POWs. Their release generated a large amount of coverage, and seemed to suggest Milosevic was ready to negotiate. Further evidence of this perceived willingness can be seen in other reports of the time. There was a report, by the Libyan

news agency *JANA*, that Milosevic had sent a proposal to end the war to the Libyan leader, Colonel Quaddafi.³⁰³ Moreover, analysts and journalists were also reporting that Milosevic was beginning to prepare public opinion for an end to the war and forging a deal with the West.³⁰⁴

The continued suffering of the refugees was still continuing to make headlines. A UN official referred to the camps in Macedonia as a “time bomb.”³⁰⁵ These camps were so full they were no longer able to provide adequate shelter for those fleeing to Macedonia.³⁰⁶ A number of refugees arriving during this period told horrific stories, including one in which 100 men were pulled from the caravan, forced to kneel, and executed.³⁰⁷ There was also the arrival of the first group of refugees in the US. Finally, Albania and Macedonia began to show the strains of the situation. In fact, there were reports of Macedonian soldiers pushing as many as 1000 refugees back inside the Kosovo border.³⁰⁸

Lastly, collateral damage reports continued to maintain a prominent position in the news reports. On 28 April, 16 civilians were killed in a southern Serbian town.³⁰⁹ At the end of the month, bombing raids in Montenegro claimed the life of the first civilian in that province.³¹⁰ On 1 May, an attack on a bridge resulted in the destruction of a bus.³¹¹ Then another 17 civilians were reported killed by NATO bombs at a police checkpoint 12 miles north of Pec.³¹² By far, the largest amount of press went to the attack on the Chinese Embassy. This attack claimed the lives of three Chinese employees. However, the bombing incident took place as the 7-8 May poll was being conducted.

8 May through 23 May

The next period to explore is the period from 8 May to 23 May. Support for the air strikes fell to 49 percent at the end of this period, the lowest point since the start of the war.³¹³ However, what is especially disconcerting is that 47 percent disapproved of the air war.³¹⁴ Prior to this, the highest disapproval rating during the bombing was 40 percent, during the 26-27 April poll.³¹⁵ It also appears that public opinion became firmly polarized. This can be seen by the poll recording the lowest “no opinion” rating, four percent.³¹⁶ While the wording of the question on Clinton’s handling of the situation was too different to use for comparison, his overall job approval-rating fell to its lowest level since 1996 (53 percent).³¹⁷ The approval for introducing ground troops had a minor slide to 39 percent.³¹⁸ There were two additional findings that are particularly relevant. First, 82 percent of the public favored “...the idea of a temporary suspension of air strikes in order to attempt to resolve the matter through negotiations and other diplomatic means.”³¹⁹ Additionally, the public was split on the casualties resulting from the NATO bombings.³²⁰ Forty-eight percent agreed with the statement: “The US and NATO are doing everything possible to conduct the air strikes in a way that minimizes the number of civilian casualties.” Forty-six percent, however, agreed with the statement: “The US and NATO could do more to minimize the number of civilian casualties being caused by the air strikes.”³²¹

The primary story during this period was the fallout from the attack on the Chinese Embassy. The US quickly took responsibility for the attack. The mistake resulted because “...US intelligence agencies provided the target location based on an outdated 1992 street map that failed to show the embassy’s correct address.”³²² In fact, the map

had been updated in 1997 and 1998, but still failed to show the correct location of the embassy, which had moved in 1996.³²³ The bombing set off protests in China, the stoning of the American Embassy there, and speculation of damage to long-term relations.³²⁴ However, of greater concern was the derailment of the diplomatic process. In an unexpected visit to Beijing, Viktor Chernomyrdin aligned himself with the Chinese demand for an unconditional halt to NATO's bombing.³²⁵ Furthermore, Russian President Yeltsin threatened to pull out of the diplomatic efforts to find a solution for Kosovo if NATO continued its air war.³²⁶

The bombing of the Chinese Embassy highlighted other mistakes. Numerous articles were written that summarized the various mistakes of NATO forces. To make matters worse, the deadliest civilian bombing incident took place less than a week later. The attack took place near the village of Korisa, where a group of Kosovar Albanians were camped along the side of a road.³²⁷ Exact numbers of dead were hard to determine, but Yugoslav officials placed it at 79.³²⁸ Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon was quick to respond to this incident. He claimed that Milosevic was using Albanians as "human shields."³²⁹ He noted that as many as a third of the people killed in the NATO attacks might have been placed there by using this "diabolical" tactic.³³⁰ Finally, when NATO aircraft returned to Belgrade, a week after the Chinese Embassy bombing, they accidentally "...bombed a hospital, killing four people, and damaged the residence of the Swedish, Spanish and Norwegian ambassadors, as well as the Libyan Embassy."³³¹

There were a number of reports about the military's conduct of the war. The same weekend the Chinese Embassy was attacked, an F-16CG was shot down by an SA-3. After the shootdown the pilot was recovered within hours.³³² It appears the incident did

little to alter air operations. But the mistaken bombing of the embassy did result in changes being made to the targeting procedures.³³³ The air strategy itself was also getting heavily criticized. Numerous active and retired officers, including some of the pilots involved in the operation, talked about their misgivings regarding the conduct of ALLIED FORCE. General Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, tried to put the best foot forward by stating that the attacks had taken "...a significant toll on the Serb forces in Kosovo and throughout the rest of Yugoslavia."³³⁴ Nevertheless, he had to admit, "It is possible that a force like the one Milosevic is using for ethnic cleansing and terror in Kosovo could hold out for quite some time."³³⁵ In an attempt to further isolate Milosevic politically and militarily, NATO announced that it would open two new fronts in the bombing campaign, with strikes from Turkey and Hungary.³³⁶ One could also see the desire to exert more pressure on Milosevic during an interview with Lieutenant General Short, the CFACC. In this interview General Short said, "At the same time I am executing SACEUR's number one priority – killing the army in Kosovo – I also need to strike at the leadership and the people around Milosevic to compel them to change their behavior in Kosovo and accept the terms NATO has on the table."³³⁷ He pointed to the political constraints that limited his ability to fully execute this plan.³³⁸ There were also internal problems surfacing in the military. Secretary of Defense Cohen warned that continued bombing would wear down pilot morale, stressing the need for more men or fewer missions.³³⁹ The Air Force announced that it was going to expand its "stop-loss" measures until after the Kosovo crisis was resolved.³⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that the number of "human" interest stories about the pilots flying in the war seemed to increase during this time period. They included reports of how many of the pilots were flying

from their home station and the stress it caused, the challenges presented by the Serbian air defenses, and difficulties associated with operating in this type of tactical environment.

There were numerous stories about the refugees, but with a different emphasis. There were still stories of massacres being committed by the Serb forces³⁴¹; however, it was not a daily occurrence as in the previous periods. There are two reasons for this: the majority of the “ethnic cleansing” had already been accomplished and some Serb forces had been withdrawn from the province. The concern now became what to do about the refugees still inside the province, many holding out in the hills with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).³⁴² Concern also mounted over the ethnic Albanians trapped in the Montenegrin province.³⁴³ Finally, the government of Macedonia was desperately seeking US funds to alleviate the domestic problem caused by the massive influx of refugees.³⁴⁴

24 May through 10 June

With the signing of the military technical agreement on 9 June 1999, the war essentially came to an end.³⁴⁵ In its aftermath, public opinion was split over whether it had been worth the effort. Forty-seven percent said it was while the same percentage thought it was not.³⁴⁶ This is in stark contrast to the 80 percent that thought the Gulf War was worthwhile after its completion.³⁴⁷ Additionally, there were only 41 percent who were willing to agree that President Clinton’s actions were a “...significant foreign policy achievement.”³⁴⁸ Fifty-six percent thought it was not.³⁴⁹ Finally, while the majority, 60 percent, favored the peace agreement, only 53 percent supported the introduction of ground troops as peacekeepers.³⁵⁰

The media coverage during the last period concentrated on four main topics. These were the negotiation process, the questionable success of the air war, the potential of a ground war, and the mounting civilian casualties. The negotiations during this period of time followed a seesaw course. Russia recommitted itself to finding a diplomatic solution. Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari assumed a more prominent role as the European Union envoy. However, the news of Milosevic's indictment on "war crimes" threatened the peace process.³⁵¹ Chernomyrdin denounced the indictment as a "political show." Then on 2 June, hopes were raised when it was reported that Germany received a letter from Milosevic that said he was ready to withdraw forces from Kosovo and accept a "United Nations presence" in the province.³⁵² Within days, Russian and Western negotiators presented a plan to end the conflict.³⁵³ On 4 June it was reported that Yugoslavia had accepted the international peace plan, requiring the withdrawal of all army and police forces and the presence of a NATO dominated peacekeeping force.³⁵⁴ The following weekend the talks between British Lieutenant General Mike Jackson and Yugoslav generals broke down. Specifically, they could not agree to a timetable for the withdrawal of forces.³⁵⁵ It should be noted that during this time NATO aircraft continued limited attacks.³⁵⁶ On 7 June, just as peace appeared at hand, the Serbian army launched a major offensive against KLA forces near the Albanian border.³⁵⁷ This served to reinvigorate the air effort by NATO.³⁵⁸ After this brief episode, the military technical agreement was signed on 9 June.³⁵⁹ Finally, air operations were suspended on 10 June.³⁶⁰

The success of the air war continued to be questioned during this time period. This pessimism was based on a variety of reports that portrayed airpower as ineffective. Initially, it was reported that Serbia sent fresh troops into Kosovo.³⁶¹ There were also

numerous reports about the frustration military leaders felt due to political constraints, leading one to believe this was the primary reason for the lack of apparent success.³⁶² Additionally, there was also a statement by Pentagon spokesman Bacon that air strikes alone may not force success in the next two months. Time had become a critical issue as NATO was increasingly worried about the possibility of the war moving into the winter. Winter operations would limit NATO's ability to conduct a ground war, if necessary, and create nightmares for those tending to the refugees. However, General Short appeared hopeful that the situation would resolve itself.³⁶³ He said, "I don't have a good feel for knowing how close they are to breaking, but I'll tell you that if we do this for two more months, we will either kill this army in Kosovo or send it on the run."³⁶⁴ The air effort ran into another perceived snag when the indictment of Milosevic was announced. Many felt that this would strengthen the resolve of the Serbian leader. It was not until Milosevic's initial announcement to accept a peace agreement that the news turned positive for airpower.

During this time, the desire for the conflict to end before winter, and the perceived "failure" of the bombing campaign, ignited numerous articles on the use of ground troops. It is not the purpose of this paper to debate the coercive effect of these reports on Milosevic, merely to document what the public was exposed to during this time. Of course, since the beginning of the conflict, armchair strategists had urged for the use of ground troops. However, during this period there were some indications that this issue was being seriously considered. The NATO approval of a 50,000 heavily armed peacekeeping force first opened the door of speculation.³⁶⁵ Secretary Cohen met with four NATO counterparts to discuss what would be needed in order to mount a ground

invasion of Kosovo.³⁶⁶ On 1 June, Administration officials said that the President met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss options for using ground troops if NATO decided to invade Kosovo.³⁶⁷ While the timing of the peace agreement prevented more detailed planning of an invasion, there is no doubt that this option was gaining momentum.

The final aspect is the emphasis on Serbian civilian casualties and suffering. This suffering started with more attacks on the infrastructure of Serbia, and more complaints of collateral damage. A group of Op-Eds appeared questioning the legality and morality of bringing the war home to the people.³⁶⁸ Among these, former President Jimmy Carter criticized the US tactics as “senseless and excessively brutal.”³⁶⁹ Small antiwar groups also staged protests throughout the country.³⁷⁰ However, the problem escalated after NATO bombing resulted in numerous civilian casualties at the end of May and in early June. The bombing killed one in Belgrade, two on a bridge in southern Serbia, Nine on a bridge in Vavarin (in the middle of market day), 10 in an apartment building in Novi Pazar, and 16 in a hospital complex in Surdulica.³⁷¹ Substantial anti-bombing sentiments began to emerge after these incidents. As Steven Erlanger, a *New York Times* reporter, stated: “NATO spokesman, Jamie Shea, brushed off the increased number of civilian deaths again...as unfortunate ‘collateral damage’ of war.”³⁷² The civilian deaths prompted numerous Congressmen to ask for a bombing pause and Amnesty International to raise concerns about the conduct of NATO’s operations.³⁷³ Another related issue was the criticism of the tactics that maximized airmen’s protection. This discussion is specifically set aside for a follow-on section. The importance of the preceding discussion is that the opposition to NATO bombing grew as the number “collateral damage” incidents increased over time.

Overall, if one just simply examines the fact that the US was able to accomplish its objectives while sustaining zero losses, it is perplexing that the public offered such little support. However, the transition from the 61 percent support on 13 April to the dismal 47 percent at the end of the war might be explained by evaluating it in light of the principles developed in Chapter 2. As noted in that chapter, Eric Larson pointed out that the “prospect for success” has historically been an issue that effects public support. During the latter half of the war more airpower critics appeared. They pointed to the inability of airpower to stop the Serbian actions in Kosovo. Furthermore, in the second half, the reports of the humanitarian crisis changed. Reports indicated that the Serbs had essentially accomplished their mission to “cleanse” the province, leaving NATO to care for the refugees. In an attempt to reverse this trend, military action was designed to reverse the course and compel Milosevic to accept NATO terms. The problem with this strategy was it increased the “cost of the operation,” another issue Larson pointed to as having a historic affect on opinion. Additionally, collateral damage increased dramatically in the second half of the war. While the data in Chapter 2 is nebulous regarding the level of US sensitivity to civilian deaths, all the authors agreed that the public is concerned about this issue. In fact, Mueller was able to quantify this sensitivity in the Gulf War; Americans perceived the loss of one US serviceman to be equal to 20 Iraqis. However, Operation ALLIED FORCE had a balance sheet that read zero losses on the NATO side. Therefore, it is not surprising that public support declined as the Serbian civilian death toll mounted, according to some reports into the thousands.

Unmanned Assets

This section addresses how the use of unmanned assets would have affected public opinion during the latter half of the war. In this analysis, the five major issues that influenced public opinion will be discussed. These are the inability of airpower to meet the objectives, the amount of collateral damage, the humanitarian crisis, the negotiation process, and the potential use of ground forces. The first issue is the ability, or inability of airpower to accomplish the mission. In the Kosovo conflict, numerous officials and military leaders pointed to political sensitivity over friendly casualties as the reason for the constrained use of airpower. Substitution of unmanned systems for manned systems would not have inherently increased the lethality, precision, or capability of the air campaign. However, planners might have been able to increase the risk that they were willing to take by eliminating the threat of friendly casualties. Certainly, in our risk calculus the potential loss or capture of an aircrew far outweighs the loss of an aircraft. The only exception may be the loss of a B-2, which might create a strategic effect that outweighs the loss of the two pilots. Nevertheless, there was great reluctance to accept more risk. Increased risk, however, does not equal increased effectiveness. Targets, mechanisms, and effects must be carefully selected in order to create a strategy. This strategy must then be carried out to achieve victory. Unfortunately, the Air Force often focuses less on strategy than the technical capabilities of a weapon system. The propaganda surrounding unmanned assets is no exception. It is designed to give the impression that this technology can solve any military problem. This creates an illusion of heightened expectations in the public and leads to greater disappointment if not fulfilled. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, failure to meet expectations is a significant aspect of decreasing

public support. There is also a pragmatic consideration when using unmanned assets. They are not disposable, nor will they be so inexpensive that they can be carelessly employed and quickly replaced. Colonel John Warden, author of the book *The Air Campaign: Planning for Combat*, claims that attrition has always been a major aspect of air warfare. Historically, attrition rates of 10 percent will cause a major change of strategy. Therefore, the public's expectations of unrealistic effectiveness will be confronted by the need to execute a strategy within acceptable attrition limits.

The second consistent aspect of public concern involved collateral damage, specifically civilian casualties. In ALLIED FORCE these deaths were blamed primarily on poor targeting decisions or the overly cautious tactics used by allied pilots, that is, higher altitude employment. In terms of strategy there is no reason to believe the use of unmanned assets will quell the criticism and concern associated with attacking "dual use" targets. Furthermore, even if one accepts greater risk in the employment of unmanned assets it will not eliminate civilian deaths. First, increasing risk usually means facing a more robust defensive system in a given location. Typically, this system protects some vital area of the country. In most countries, this coincides with population centers. Therefore, we accept the most risk around areas of large civilian concentrations. The ability to strike more targets in these areas will merely lead to more collateral damage. Regardless of advances in weapons and targeteering, bombs cause collateral damage whether dropped by a manned or unmanned system. Next, if one operates in this higher risk environment, the likelihood of a shoot down increases. If this results in losses, the wreckage will inevitably cause even more collateral damage.

An associated aspect of civilian casualties is how the public will view these mistakes when made solely by unmanned assets. In Kosovo, especially after the Djakovica incident, there was a concerted effort to portray the human frailties that led to the mistakes. Additionally, scattered throughout the coverage of the war were reports about the difficult fight our pilots were up against. As an example, *U.S. News and World Report* ran an article that referred to our pilots as “escape artists” in reference to the many missile and triple-A attacks they evaded.³⁷⁴ This aspect is not present with unmanned systems. It seems quite probable that the inability to “humanize” our mistakes will cause even more pressure on leaders to change tactics when civilian deaths occur.

In regards to the humanitarian crisis, it seems unmanned assets would have little effect on the opinion of the public. Especially since, during the second half of the war, the majority of the ethnic Albanians had already been displaced. The only potential is that unmanned assets would increase the general frustration level of the public. While the public could somewhat understand the difficulties of manned aircraft and helicopters attacking the dispersed forces in Kosovo, an overconfidence in the capabilities of unmanned systems might have led to frustration over the growing displacement problem. This growing frustration over the humanitarian crisis might increase the pressure to attack targets in Kosovo, at the expense of coercive targeting and the success of the war. What remains to be seen is how effectively military strategy can be maintained in a limited war where public frustration runs high. This issue will be examined more fully in the next section.

Unmanned assets might adversely affect the negotiation process. In Kosovo the desire to stop bombing and negotiate reached fevered levels. However, action was not

taken on this sentiment because of the potential for adverse military repercussions. If an enemy is allowed a pause then he has time to repair defenses and reconstitute forces. During the Vietnam War, airpower learned that pausing attacks during negotiations is a poor idea. Furthermore, current friendly casualty aversion reinforces this perspective. However, this sentiment does not resonate with the public. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Americans believe in the process of communication and compromise. One can assume this sentiment will increase as the risk of friendly casualties diminishes. If we succumb to this pressure then we run the risk of dragging out the conflict in a series of attack-pause-attack pulses, making victory even more difficult to achieve. If we resist the pressure, we set ourselves up for a difficult PR backlash if further civilian casualties occur.

Finally, it is important to assess how the use of unmanned assets would have affected the ability to use ground forces. In Kosovo, it was the perceived inability of airpower that spurred the discussion of ground force involvement. However, public sentiment was strongly opposed to such a solution throughout the latter half of the conflict. At the same time the public opposed their involvement, General Clark saw ground forces as a natural progression. In a brief to NATO diplomats, he presented a slide that showed a spectrum of hostilities in a limited war scenario.³⁷⁵ It showed how the evolution of hostilities might occur: threaten the use of air strikes, the use of air strikes, threaten the use of ground troops, the use of ground troops.³⁷⁶ There was, in essence, conflict between this military thought and public opinion. In Chapter 2, it was also noted that historically Americans want to avoid a protracted conflict. This gradual escalation in force involvement can be perceived as creating that type of detested situation. Unmanned

assets might increase this problem. If this military thought prevails, the spectrum would become: threaten use of unmanned platforms, use unmanned platforms, threaten use of manned bombers, use manned bombers, threaten use of ground forces and, finally, use ground forces. By adding this layer we are quite possibly just increasing the duration of the conflict, threatening the public's support and, for all practical purposes, eliminating the possible use of ground forces.

A related issue is the idea of resolve. As one moves across the spectrum there is the notion that more public support is required at each step. This increasing support corresponds to the amount of resolve the US has to carry through to victory. Therefore, the use of unmanned assets adds a force capability at the lower end of resolve. Certainly, this aspect will not be lost to our enemies. Conceivably, it might embolden them to hold out longer than in situations where the US shows a higher level of resolve.

Political Debate during the War

United political support was never achieved during the Kosovo crisis. While the Senate initially voted to support the air campaign, the debate over its course and conduct continued. The Congressional debate resulted in some predictable, as well as unpredictable, outcomes. Predictably, both houses voted against the declaration of war on Serbia but for the authorization of additional funding to support military operations. It must be noted that the funding also helped alleviate certain readiness issues, thereby strengthening the base of support for the resolution. Unpredictably, there was a great deal of debate during the conflict on the appropriate action to take. Certainly, the political adage of "uniting at the water's edge" did not apply to Kosovo. This fractured political consensus can be most readily seen in three key debates during the course of the

conflict, all of which took place after the public support for the air campaign had started its downward trend. The results of these debates were that the House voted *not to withdraw* US forces while voting *not to support* the air campaign. The Senate debate resulted in the failure to secure an expanded authorization for the use of force by the President. This expanded authorization would have included all means necessary to achieve victory, including ground troops.

The first resolution to discuss is House Resolution 82, directing the President to withdraw US forces within 30 days of passage. While this resolution was defeated 290 to 139, it is noteworthy for two important reasons. First, 139 votes supporting a withdrawal of forces while they were engaged in a military action represents a significant number. Additionally, this vote took place only 35 days after the bombing began and NATO had not suffered any combat deaths. Second, the arguments presented in this debate are very similar to the follow-on debate regarding the authorization for air operations over Yugoslavia.

There were three main arguments presented that supported the withdrawal of troops. First, the value of the objective must be high enough to risk sacrificing the lives of American servicemen. This sentiment can be seen in the remarks of Congressman Hanson (R-Utah). He said, "Support of our troops means...not putting them in harm's way without a clear goal, which can be achieved by military means, and which supports our vital national interest."³⁷⁷ Second the air strategy employed to date was ineffective. In fact, claims were made that it might have caused more harm than good. As Congressman Tancredo (R-Colo.), a member of House Committee on International Relations, stated, "We have ruined too many lives there in Kosovo, we have done too

much damage; too many people are dead as a result of actions we have taken. It is time to withdraw our forces.”³⁷⁸ Finally, this perceived failure led to the conclusion that victory would require an enormous effort, one that members of Congress suggested was not worth the cost. Congressman DeLay (R-Tex.) stated, “Many who argue we cannot pull out say we should stay to save face, if for no other reason. I would like to ask these people, was it worth it to stay in Vietnam just to save face? The root of this crisis is centuries old, and no occupation by foreigners can craft a peace where no desire for it exists.”³⁷⁹

The opponents to the resolution presented three primary arguments that carried the day. First, The humanitarian crisis in Kosovo demanded US involvement. Second, US credibility would be shattered if it failed to support NATO in its first major military action in 50 years. Finally, that “...a vote withdrawing our troops is a vote against our troops.”³⁸⁰ It is interesting to note that no one claimed the air war to be a success. Congressman Gilman (R-N.Y.) summed it up well when he said, “We all know that Operation Allied Force has not been as successful as we would have liked, but now is certainly not the time to suspend our military operations in Yugoslavia. Doing that would only compound the humanitarian tragedy that has been unfolding before our eyes. It would reward President Milosevic for his murderous strategy of depopulating Kosovo of its ethnic Albanian majority and remove all pressure on him to agree to any diplomatic settlement that would protect the rights of the people of Kosovo.”³⁸¹

The next resolution debated by the House pertained to the authorization of air strikes over Yugoslavia. This resolution was the same as the one passed by the Senate five-weeks prior. In the debate, the majority of the issues and arguments remained constant.

What seemed to change was the attitude of 70 Congressmen. These Representatives voted against the withdrawal of US forces, while, on the same day, voting against the use of airpower. Some insight on this paradoxical position can be gleaned by looking at the testimony of the two congressmen who voted in this manner and spoke during the airpower debate. Both pointed to two reasons for this unconventional vote. First, both said it would be a mistake to publicize plans for a withdrawal 30 days in advance. Second, they thought that the bombing policy was a mistake and should not be supported.³⁸² As Congressman Bereuter (R-Nebr.) claimed about his voting, “I voted against the [withdrawal of our forces]...for strategic and tactical reasons we do not want to give that 30-day warning before a withdrawal would theoretically be required under the invocations of the War Powers Act. I urge my colleagues, do not take this gratuitous step to authorize the bombing war.”³⁸³ Others that just voted against the air operations pointed to the inability of airpower to meet the objectives. As Congressman Wilson (R-N.Mex.) said, “I am a former Air Force officer. I believe in airpower, as my father did and my grandfather before him. And despite the images that we see on our televisions of precise attacks, we can hit bridges, but we cannot change the mind of Slobodan Milosevic. As a result, we have not been able to stop a door-to-door campaign of repression and ethnic cleansing, and we have made it worse.”³⁸⁴

The House resolution supporters continued to focus on the need to maintain US credibility and to support our troops. They entered into the record a letter from Henry Kissinger stating, “To back down would demonstrate a dangerous lack of commitment and credibility, both to nations tempted to take advantage of our perceived weakness and to our NATO allies.”³⁸⁵ Another letter, from Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski, foreign policy

expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., added, “It is absolutely essential that NATO should prevail fully, and thus without making any compromises regarding the demand it made prior to the bombing. Failure to do so would be most dangerous to America’s global leadership and would undermine both credibility and cohesion of NATO.”³⁸⁶ There were also several pleas to support our troops. Congressman Gephardt (D-Mo.) argued we should have learned from Vietnam; we need to support our troops and not “...leave them out there with ambivalence.”³⁸⁷

The other house debated Senate Resolution 20 in early May, which would have given the President blanket authorization to use the necessary force to achieve victory. The logic behind this resolution was to ensure the US had the proper commitment, authorization of necessary means to achieve victory, and support for the actions of our troops. Senator McCain (R-Ariz.), a resolution sponsor, urged the “...president [to]...exercise the authority vested in his office to use the power of the United States effectively to achieve victory as quickly as possible.”³⁸⁸ Additionally, he claimed, “Senators cannot say that they oppose the war, but support our pilots, and then allow our pilots to continue fighting a war that they believe cannot justify their loss. If the war is not worth fighting for, then it is not worth letting Americans die for it.”³⁸⁹ He further criticized the House for its mixed signals resulting from the debates previously mentioned.³⁹⁰ However, the real impact of the resolution was that it presented a forum for open debate on the conflict.³⁹¹

What was evident in the debate was a growing frustration about the war. Some blamed too much political oversight; some claimed that there needed to be more. Some claimed a need to increase intensity, others a need to “pause” and negotiate. Senator

Wellstone (D-Md.), an original supporter of air operations, criticized the conduct of the operation. In his opinion “...putting pressure on the people [who will then put pressure on Milosevic]...cannot be used to justify the expansion of civilian targets to be bombed.”³⁹² There are “...no rules of war which allow for the targeting of civilian targets like some of those we have targeted. [We need to] rethink this strategy, not least because it undermines the legitimate moral and political claims we have made to justify our military efforts to protect innocent civilians in Kosovo.”³⁹³ Overall, one is left with the impression that the Senate support was critically fractured, and the performance of the air war merely served as a catalyst for debate.

Unmanned Assets

When looking at the political debate, there are some potentially alarming implications if manned systems had been replaced with unmanned systems. In the House debate on withdrawing forces, the most alarming aspect was the considerable support for this measure after only one month of combat. Anecdotal evidence suggests this support might have been even higher except for concern over the problems associated with a 30-day notice. Presumably, an aspect of this concern is the increased risk to our forces. With diminished risk inherent in using unmanned assets, one can expect more votes in favor of withdrawal.

However, in order to gain a better understanding of the theorized impact, the other arguments presented on both sides must be assessed. First, the idea of supporting our troops was used by both sides, but in quite different contexts. The supporters of withdrawal essentially were questioning the policy, claiming it was not worth risking further American lives. It seems that if unmanned assets had been used, the underlying

argument would still have been valid. On the other hand, those who were against withdrawal used support of our troops in the classic sense. That is, to support our “troops in harm’s way.” Certainly, even an unmanned fighting force would have troops in the area to guide and support operations. Therefore, the argument retains some merit. Nevertheless, it is considerably weakened. Second, people who voted against withdrawal pointed to maintaining US credibility as a critical factor. It is interesting to theorize how unmanned assets would have altered this argument. Without risk to US forces there might be an increased willingness to support operations. However, if the use of unmanned assets signals a decreased amount of resolve, as was previously discussed, this might correspond to a decreased need to maintain credibility. Finally, the follow-on arguments by both sides are essentially a cost/benefit debate. Supporters of withdrawal stated the operation was a failure and would cost too much to win. Those who rejected the idea of withdrawal claimed that such an action would only increase the humanitarian crisis. It is difficult to speculate how unmanned assets would have affected this calculus. What is certain is that without risk to our personnel this argument would gain in importance. The problem is that assessing military strategy and effectiveness is a difficult task in a coercive air campaign. This is made worse by the “fog and friction” of war, which creates misleading and conflicting information. However, if the emphasis is placed more upon the cost/benefit calculus, the desire for this type of information will increase.

The next debate to consider is the House debate regarding support for the air campaign. The failure to win support for these operations exposed some potential concerns. First, the arguments that were presented in the debate closely aligned with the

withdrawal debate. Second, the operation was occurring during the consideration of this resolution, a resolution that had already been passed by the Senate. Third, based on the historical data, it is amazing that support was so low so soon after hostilities started. This leads one to speculate on the underlying assumption that allows for this kind of outcome. Perhaps, Major General (ret.) Link, now head of the Developing Aerospace Leaders Program, said it best when he claimed that politicians perceive that “air war is not real war.”³⁹⁴ If this is true in a situation where US pilots are facing credible threats daily, how will unmanned aerial warfare be perceived? While specifics cannot be deduced, it will certainly be perceived as even less of a “real war.” This will create two potential obstacles. First, if not engaged in a “real war” the possibility exists to avoid debating the issue for an extended period of time. While acknowledging that Presidential and Congressional leadership plays a significant role, the fact remains it would have been practically impossible for President Bush to conduct a large operation, like the Gulf War, without pre-hostilities Congressional support. However, President Clinton conducted ALLIED FORCE without it. This leaves Congress the option of opening debate during hostilities. Second, if the debate is opened up during hostilities, it will be subject to the tactical fluctuations of the campaign. In any military operation, there will be temporary tactical setbacks. However, if debate is opened up while these are occurring, they can represent a strategic hindrance. If we determine the policy to be sound prior to hostilities, tactical setbacks can be viewed as temporary obstacles in pursuit of a just cause. Whereas waiting to determine the soundness of the policy as it unfolds causes every tactical setback to be potentially viewed as a failed policy.

The final debate to explore is Senate Resolution 20, regarding expanded authorization for the President. While the Senate initially supported the air operations, the question of expanding force authorization never really had a chance to pass, for two primary reasons. First, some supporters had become disillusioned with the conduct of the air war to that point. Second, even though the US was risking pilots' lives daily, the perceived risk associated with the use of ground forces was considered prohibitive. If one factors in the use of unmanned assets, it is hard to believe the debate would have retained the small amount of support it did. With unmanned assets, the need to support our pilots fighting the war erodes. This will cause the debate to focus more sharply on the other main debate point, the conduct of our air forces. Therefore, issues such as "dual use" targeting and collateral receive more attention. This increase in attention might result in them becoming more politicized issues than they presently are. Given the great difficulty we have in quelling the critics after tragic mistakes, this might present a paralyzing effect on target selection and attack.

Operational Constraints

It is also important to address the political constraints placed on the military's conduct of the "air war" on Serbia. However, this section does not imply that political constraints are a new aspect of aerial warfare. Since the earliest strategic bombardment operations in World War I to the much-publicized Vietnam War, politicians have always made inputs to strategy and targeting. Nonetheless, it is critical to gain an understanding of how the political apparatus affected this particular military action in order to theorize on the impact of unmanned assets. In ALLIED FORCE, politics affected the command and control structure, the selection of targets, and the overall course of the strategy. In

the case of command and control, there were two significant aspects. First, NATO was actually able to build an effective 19-nation warfighting coalition. Second, this system did not operate smoother despite the fact that NATO had been in existence for 50 years. At the strategic level, the political pressure resulted in General Clark's toughest job being "...keeping the 19 members nations of the alliance lined up behind him as NATO [carried out the air campaign]."³⁹⁵ At the operational level, the preponderance of US assets created friction. The *Kosovo/Operation ALLIED FORCE Report* to Congress stated, "...parallel US and NATO command-and-control structures complicated operational planning and unity of command."³⁹⁶ This went as far as the creation of a US-only air tasking order (ATO) so that the allies did not know what the B-2s and F-117s were doing.³⁹⁷ General Short "...said he 'failed miserably' at building a true coalition command structure."³⁹⁸ It was bad enough for him to announce that "...we should never again ...run a US-only command structure inside of a NATO alliance. ...We can never do that again to our allies or we will not have allies."³⁹⁹

The political involvement in the target selection process was highly publicized. At the start of the war, targets required approval of all 19-member nations.⁴⁰⁰ Although, "...during the course of the campaign, NATO developed mechanisms for delegating target approval to military commanders."⁴⁰¹ Nevertheless, this delegation did not apply to "...selected categories of targets - for example, targets in downtown Belgrade, in Montenegro, or targets likely to involve high collateral damage."⁴⁰² For these selected categories, the primary focus was to minimize collateral damage, particularly civilian casualties. This effort was nothing short of Herculean. Targets were matched with weapons effects, based on impact angle and type, to determine the amount of damage.

This damage was further broken down into the areas radiating from the target that represented areas of potential death down to areas of potential broken glass.⁴⁰³ However, this effort did not insure smooth military operations. General Short said, “Our politicians need to understand that this isn’t going to be clean. There is going to be collateral damage. There will be unintended civilian casualties. We will do our level best to prevent both, but they’ve got to grit their teeth and stay with us. We can’t cut and run the first time we hit the wrong end of a bridge.”⁴⁰⁴ Furthermore, the reactions to unintended destruction “...placed our kids at greater risk and made it more difficult to do our job,” Short said.⁴⁰⁵

Finally, this political involvement was cited as a major factor for the apparent lack of strategy. As General Short said, “Airmen would have liked to have gone after that target set [leadership] on the first night and sent a clear signal that we were taking the gloves off from the very beginning, that we were not going to incrementalize, that we’re not going to try to do a little bit of this and see how you like it and try a little bit of that and see how you like it.”⁴⁰⁶ Furthermore, he commented, “I am an executor more than I am an air campaign planner.”⁴⁰⁷ The reason behind this dilemma was lack of clear military objectives from the political leaders. Once again, General Short adds some insight when he asserted, “We began the first night with our objective being to demonstrate NATO resolve. That is tough to tell the kids at Aviano to go out and put in on the line to ‘demonstrate resolve’.”⁴⁰⁸ It was not until after the NATO summit, and continued warnings from the Secretary of Defense and CJCS that limited options would not guarantee success that the air war intensified.⁴⁰⁹ Target sets were expanded, and for the first time a strategy cell was formed. The strategy developed was referred to by targeting

officers as the “...‘3M’ strategy – money, MUP (Ministry of Interior), and media.”⁴¹⁰ However, that is not to say the strategy was carried out without a hitch. There continued to be massive political pressure exerted on the operations. In May, the governments of Germany, Italy, and Britain all faced domestic challenges over their support for the war.⁴¹¹ Italian Prime Minister Massimo D’Alema even proclaimed, “The end of the war must be sought through dialogue, not military victory.”⁴¹² Later in May, two dozen House Democrats, most of whom initially supported the war, appealed to President Clinton to halt the bombing for 72 hours in order to bring Milosevic to the bargaining table.⁴¹³

This problem was further exacerbated by the fact that the military had a difficult time articulating its actions in the war. The air forces could not point to an amount of land recaptured, the number of refugees rescued, or even an accurate number of Serbian forces destroyed. What made this particularly difficult was the strategy aimed at coercing Milosevic. However, creating measures of effectiveness for coercion that can be easily understood by the public and politicians alike are problematic. Therefore, reports tend to look vague or anecdotal. Approximately two weeks before the end of the war, Kenneth Bacon said, “We do have anecdotal reports through the KLA and other sources of [Serbian] units being unable to move because they’re out of fuel or supplies.”⁴¹⁴ Reports at times also appeared counterintuitive. After attacks on the Serbian power system on 2 May, Jamie Shea said, “We regret the inconvenience that power outages have caused to the Serb people.”⁴¹⁵ However, as William Arkin, *Washington Post* columnist and Human Rights senior military advisor, pointed out, supported by many inside the Air Force, that “...the whole point of turning off the lights...was to bring the war home to the Yugoslav

people by causing quite a lot of ‘inconvenience’.”⁴¹⁶ The problem is that no one knew or still knows what won the war. It might have been the threat of a ground invasion, the Russian involvement, attacks on the fielded forces in Kosovo, attacks on civilian morale targets (such as electrical power and media), or “crony” targets.⁴¹⁷ Without a clear theory of victory each target was independently justified, and not well represented as part of a larger coherent strategy. A strategy made more difficult by the constant political interactions domestically and internationally.

Unmanned Assets

It is difficult to assess the impact of unmanned assets on the command and control system. On the one hand, it is quite possible for the US and its allies to incorporate the lessons of ALLIED FORCE and resolve structural issues. There is also the possibility that personalities of the leaders will create an environment, which minimizes command problems. In either case, the use of unmanned assets would have little impact. However, there are two other possibilities. First, if the US leads in the development of unmanned assets, it might result in the US maintaining the dominant force application role. This would not be based solely on the ability to hit targets, like our current precision and stealth technology lead, it would be based on our ability to hit targets, albeit with stealth and precision, without risk. Given the supreme interest in limiting the risk to friendly forces developed earlier, this is a logical conclusion. Furthermore, the employment of these assets might create a security barrier, much like present “stealth” technology. It is possible that these assets will be controlled as “US-only” forces. Second, if the war is carried out with predominantly US assets, American political and military leaders might desire an equivalent amount of responsibility. General Short pointed to the problems

created by the over-representation of US personnel on the staff during Kosovo. This might be even more pronounced if all the strike platforms were US assets.

The impact of politics in the targeting process is unlikely to decrease with the use of unmanned assets. ALLIED FORCE highlighted the growing trend to limit collateral damage, particularly civilian deaths. In this respect, constant changes were made to ensure an adequate level of political oversight. In Kosovo, this pressure caused American “kids to be at greater risk.”⁴¹⁸ It is improbable that the elimination of friendly human risk would curtail inputs from political sources. More than likely, there would be an even greater ability to affect the targeting process down to the tactical level. This ability to dictate the operations at all levels will also increase as a function of communications technology. As the report to Congress stated, “...commanders’ video teleconferences spanned the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of command...as a result, strategic and operational commanders were able to directly influence tactical operations.”⁴¹⁹

Finally, it is impossible to imagine that politics will not affect military strategy if unmanned assets are used. Military strategy is borne of politics, and to separate the two is impractical. What is important is *how the military strategy will be affected*. Making matters more difficult is the blurred distinction between military and political spheres in a limited war environment. The complex nature of this interaction caused the ALLIED FORCE strategy to wander for quite some time. If unmanned assets were used in place of manned systems, other strategy problems might have arisen. In the latter stages of the war, there was a significant amount of pressure to pause bombing operations in the hopes of reaching a negotiated settlement. With manned systems, the leaders must balance the

desire to negotiate with the risk created when an adversary is given a chance to repair and reconstitute his defenses. However, when unmanned systems are used the risk to pilots is eliminated, changing the nature of this calculus. It is possible that mounting political pressure, associated with no risk to friendly forces, will enable leaders to select this course of action. The problem is that this action is considered *verboden* to military strategy. One can expect tension to increase between military and political leaders if such an option is chosen. Additionally, adversaries might encourage this sort of negotiated pause in order to increase the duration of the war, potentially gaining a strategic advantage. As was noted in Chapter 2, prolonged conflict runs counter to American public support.

The ability to carry out a coercion strategy might become increasingly difficult with the use of unmanned assets. Coercion strategies are definitely more of an art than a science. As was seen in Kosovo, this creates a problem “selling” this type of strategy to political leaders and the public. In that conflict, it took a month of sub-standard performance prior to expanding the target list. At the same time, operational constraints made the destruction of Serbian forces in Kosovo difficult. There are two aspects of unmanned assets that might make a coercion strategy even more difficult to carry out. First, the ability of unmanned forces to operate in a higher risk environment might increase the pressure to attack the fielded forces. Certainly in Kosovo there was a great deal of pressure to attack the forces responsible for the “ethnic cleansing,” as opposed to “dual use” targets. Second, the conduct of a coercion strategy with unmanned assets will not, in itself, limit the collateral damage. In fact, there is the potential for collateral

damage to increase. It could increase because increased risk acceptance could equate to increased sorties, and increased sorties will mean increasing collateral damage.

War demands Bloodshed

This section will examine the Kosovo conflict in the light of just war theory (referenced in Chapter 2). First, in terms of *jus ad bellum* criterion, critics claimed it failed two of the tests. It failed based on “creating a better state of peace.” Much like the Gulf War, claims were made that all non-military options had not been exhausted, claims which no one has countered.⁴²⁰ This line of argumentation suggests that if one were to explore all the options, war might have been averted. However, this fails to take into account the time sensitive nature of the problem. Each day that passed meant more Serbian atrocities and “ethnic cleansing” taking place in Kosovo. Critics further argued that we failed to assure a “reasonable chance of success.”⁴²¹ They pointed to the initial JCS warning, which claimed airpower alone would not work. Still in all, there is evidence that the majority of the leadership felt, prior to the war, that a few days of bombing would bring Milosevic to the bargaining table. So it appears that the arguments advancing the idea that NATO had not met *jus ad bellum* criterion are weak. The public opinion and the political debate data discussed earlier support the idea that Americans believed that stopping the “ethnic cleansing” represented a “just cause,” and that US leadership believed that a military solution was feasible.

The real concern was questions raised over our conduct of the war, or *jus in bello* criterion. Both aspects of discrimination and proportionality were called into question. However, these complaints were not limited to religious circles. Senator Wellstone (D-Md.), who voted in favor of air operations, raised concern over the “morally

questionable” nature of the “dual use” targets being attacked. Previous sections of this thesis also cited examples of others that shared the view that the damage being done in Kosovo was not proportional, because NATO forces were not stopping the “ethnic cleansing” and were simply making matters worse. This idea is closely tied into the criteria of “discrimination,” because the bombing of Serbian infrastructure resulted in numerous civilian deaths. President Clinton framed the Administration’s argument best when he said, shortly after collateral damage resulted in numerous civilian deaths, “...if the requirement is that nothing like this can ever happen, then we’re saying its O.K. with us if Mr. Milosevic displaces over a million Kosovars, kills and rapes thousands upon thousands of them. ...This is not a business of perfection. ...It should be obvious to everyone in the world that we are bending over backwards to hit...targets... where the losses in human life will be minimized.”⁴²² In other words the proportionality issue was resolved by the fact that the Serbs were committing atrocities and the discrimination issue was an unfortunate reality of a successful air campaign. However, a vocal minority was not convinced.

Particularly disturbing was the spin-off idea that “just war demands bloodshed.”⁴²³ Specifically, two quotes caused considerable concern. First, Bernard Trainor, a Boston Globe columnist and retired Marine General, stated, “High-tech weaponry permitted pilots to fly high out of harm’s way while visiting destruction below....Another troubling aspect of the so-called immaculate air war is the ability to drive an enemy to his knees without shedding a drop of the bomber’s blood.”⁴²⁴ The second occurred in February 2000, on the Larry King Live television show.⁴²⁵ Senator McCain (R-Ariz.) commented, “The most obscene chapter in recent American history is the conduct of the Kosovo

conflict when the President of the US refused to prepare for ground operations, refused to have airpower used effectively because he wanted them flying – he had them flying at 15,000 feet, where they killed innocent civilians because they were dropping bombs from such high altitude.”⁴²⁶ These quotes were so disconcerting that they were cited in an Air Force Association-sponsored study by Dr. Rebecca Grant, president of IRIS, an independent research firm. In her study, Dr. Grant set out to dispel nine “myths” of ALLIED FORCE. She attacked the preceding comments using three main points. First, that “‘just war’ depends on principles, not bloodshed;” second, that “...the laws of war don’t specify operating altitudes;” and, finally, that “...the Kosovo crisis had an enormous humanitarian dimension – this was the basis for NATO solidarity.”⁴²⁷ In the discussion of the laws of war she reiterated the Administration’s idea that the Serbians had committed horrendous atrocities which paled in comparison to our collateral damage.⁴²⁸ This argument, however, it does not really address the issue that both these men seemed to share. They were focusing on the American perspective. It was theorized by Christian scholars (Chapter 2) that the only reason the public accepted the “disproportionate destruction of Iraq” was because American lives were thrown into the calculus.⁴²⁹ In a similar light, these men seemed to question the amount of collateral damage when the risk to American pilots was perceived to be so low. This logic would seem to indicate that some segment of the population sees a relationship between *risk to American lives* and the acceptance of “collateral damage.”

The second counter to Senator McCain and Bernard Trainor’s comments was that the “laws of war don’t specify operating altitudes.” Dr. Grant claimed that low altitude does not equate to better accuracy. Additionally, this altitude restriction was removed

approximately one month into the war. Both of these facts can be accepted as true, and have been expressed by other pundits. However, this is also slightly off the mark in terms of addressing the comments. Both of these men are not necessarily talking about the technical merits of bombing, they are talking about a strategy that is based primarily on risk aversion. In fact, as early as May 1999, Senator McCain (R-Ariz.) had accused President Clinton of squeamishly “trying to avoid war while waging one.”⁴³⁰

The final point was that “...the Kosovo crisis had an enormous humanitarian dimension – this was the basis for NATO solidarity.”⁴³¹ “Dr. Grant quoted Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel as saying that ALLIED FORCE ‘really was an important humanitarian operation. ...This was, at its root, a just operation’.”⁴³² On this point there is little debate, the humanitarian crisis was a just cause. However, Dr. Grant never answered the most important question of how much risk we are required to take in pursuit of victory. Apparently, this is not an important aspect in her calculus. However, others see this as a pivotal point, directly relating to the morality of the conflict. Dr. Karl Mueller, SAAS faculty, stated, “... there are objectives that are worth dying, and killing, in order to achieve; in such cases it is morally wrong *not* to risk or take lives when necessary. ...Moreover, to blame such a lack of national courage on the imaginary squeamishness of the electorate calls into question the philosophical foundation of the Republic itself.”⁴³³ Certainly, some influential members of society felt the degree to which we limited the risk to our forces in the Kosovo conflict was morally wrong.

This discussion was not intended to judge the merits of the *jus in bello* criterion, as it applies to the quotations. It is to highlight a couple of important points. First, that there is some portion of society that associates the idea of proportionality directly to US risk,

regardless of third party losses. Second, that dealing with this issue requires attacking the problem from a different perspective. Certainly, Senator McCain (R-Ariz.) was not convinced by the just war argument presented by the administration.

Unmanned Assets

It appears that the use of unmanned assets would add little to the *jus ad bellum* debate. In Kosovo, airpower was only a player in assessing the criteria that the action has a “reasonable chance of success.” If unmanned assets were used one might argue that there would be an increased chance of success, based on technical capability, and ability to accept greater tactical risk.

However, by prosecuting a war with unmanned assets concerns over *jus in bello* criterion are likely to increase. In Kosovo, one can see the question of the morality surrounding civilian deaths, even though our pilots were gallantly evading surface to air missiles in order to accomplish their mission. If unmanned assets were used, the perception of US risk will decrease even further. Certainly, this will lead to more criticism over “dual use” targets and collateral damage. This criticism might be exacerbated by an increase sense of freedom to critique military actions, since there would be no “troops in harm’s way.”

Media and Human Shields

Throughout this chapter one can see the concern over collateral damage permeate all NATO operations. In efforts to expose this potential weakness, adversaries have typically used a combination of a media campaign and human shields. Kenneth Allard, a retired Army Colonel, Chairman of the Command and Control Systems School at

Quantico Marine Corps Base, and MSNBC military analyst, came to the conclusion that Milosevic definitely won the media war.⁴³⁴ Specifically, he pointed to the sugarcoating of the mistakes that NATO made.⁴³⁵ He claimed the best excuse that he heard from Jamie Shea, NATO Spokesman, was that NATO forces “...were accurate 99 percent of the time. Other than that, Ms. Lincoln, how was the play?”⁴³⁶ This allowed Milosevic to exploit information in his propaganda effort. The military also recognized the difficulty winning the propaganda war. A report by the *Washington Times* stated, “...the Pentagon’s chief military spokesman on Kosovo ... criticized media coverage of the air campaign, saying persistently negative reporting is blocking our the war’s real accomplishments.”⁴³⁷ It quoted him as saying, the “...frustration is that a lot of the world doesn’t realize how well this is going.”⁴³⁸ While the placement of the blame for this situation varies from personalities to bureaucracies, one thing is certain. The use of unmanned assets might make the situation worse. Politicians and the public are media savvy, prone to support our troops in harms way, and have a great deal of trust in the military. This allows the benefit of the doubt to go to our forces. In essence, there is an ability to sugarcoat some answers without severe negative effects. However, when there is no risk to our pilots, politicians and the public might demand more than sugarcoated answers. If not, one can foresee potential support problems.

Human shields also heighten concern over civilian casualties. This tactic has been used in Somalia, Lebanon and Iraq. While not new, it does create a significant problem for a force committed to limiting the amount of civilian deaths. “In Kosovo this went as far as forcibly hiding refugees at military targets so NATO would be blamed if they were killed.”⁴³⁹ The problem with this tactic is that it can be quite effective, especially if the

friendly media campaign is ineffective. Potentially, unmanned assets might be particularly exploitable. For example, imagine human shields are located at all the surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites inside a nation. If manned assets were being used, a justification could be made that civilian casualties might be necessary to protect the lives of our pilots in order to achieve victory. However, if the SAMs just meant increasing risk to an unmanned force, one might question whether this same type of argument would hold. Do we accept civilian casualties in a limited war scenario to decrease risk to unmanned forces, so they can attack strategic targets that risk more civilian casualties?

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the use of unmanned assets in a limited war scenario. Unlike Chapter 3, an historical case study of manned versus unmanned conflict could not be used. Therefore, Operation ALLIED FORCE was used as a baseline for comparison to the same conflict notionally fought by unmanned assets. Admittedly, there are two potential problems the reader might discover with this type of analysis. First, by using a single case study and theoretical data, specific conclusions cannot be viewed as historical truths. However, the majority of the findings have been consistent with the evidence presented in Chapter 2. Furthermore, this chapter was not intended to foretell future conflict, as much as lead one to consider the general impact of exclusively using unmanned assets in a limited war scenario. Second, due to the recent nature of the Kosovo conflict, some data remains undisclosed. While this is true, it is not germane to the main points discussed in this chapter. The main issues surround how unmanned assets will affect public support and political debate. As such, the relevant issues are all found in the public domain. When assessing unmanned assets influence in operational

issues, open sources are sufficient. They adequately expose the major problems of both military and political leaders.

The majority of the analysis in this chapter leads to the conclusion that the sole utilization of unmanned assets might decrease the amount of public support and fracture political support, hence jeopardizing our strategic center of gravity. However, in the early stages of the war this is not entirely true. Unmanned assets have the advantage of being easier to commit to conflict. This is because they limit the political and public concern over risk to our forces. They might also be perceived as being more effective as a byproduct of being able to accept more tactical risk. These attributes would increase the ability to commence military actions with a minimal or non-existent PR effort. In the short term this might be viewed as a positive attribute for politicians. It will potentially allow diplomacy and force to be tied more closely. This is similar to the ideas presented in Chapter 3, where in a short-term scenario (air strikes), the advantages of unmanned assets, outweigh the disadvantages.

However, a limited war scenario demands a more long-term view, and in this aspect problems are created. First, the ability to commit unmanned forces without a robust preliminary PR campaign will threaten the political and public support. Just because the US is not risking forces does not mean that the public will be committed to the operation. For the long term, the public needs to understand “why” military action is taking place. Additionally, the argument that we must support our “troops in harm’s way” plays a less significant role. Second, with no threat to our forces the need for a Congressional resolution prior to conflict will diminish. This creates a situation where political leaders are uncommitted to the operation, delaying the eventual debate until after commencement

of hostilities. Furthermore, this delay can lead to a situation where the lack of consensus might cause tactical setbacks to have strategic effects. Amazingly, even in Kosovo, a large number of Congressmen sought the withdrawal of our manned forces after hostilities began. Certainly, the use of unmanned assets would have swung more votes to this position.

The long-term public support will also be vulnerable if unmanned assets are exclusively used. The technical propaganda associated with these systems, and their ability to fly in areas of increased risk, will lead to increased expectations. These expectations will be confronted by two truths of air warfare, collateral damage and attrition. The capability of unmanned assets does not mean that attacks can be made without civilian casualties. What it does mean is that the ability to “humanize” those mistakes will decrease. Additionally, attrition considerations might drive tactics that stress conservation of assets over the need to limit collateral damage. Finally, the public sentiment to press for negotiations might reach a fevered pitch in the face of inevitable collateral damage. The interaction of public and political attitude towards the war will manifest itself in the constraints placed on the war.

Unmanned assets might complicate the ability to carry out a coherent strategy for a couple of reasons. The ability of political leaders to influence all facets of the campaign increases when friendly casualties are eliminated. There will be more of an opportunity to challenge military advice when the cost is measured in dollars, not friendly casualties. Furthermore, airpower continues to have a difficult time articulating a coercion strategy that is easily understood by our society. Finally, enemy media and human shield operations might severely impact our strategy. By properly exploiting civilian death and

destruction, our strategy will be challenged, while giving the enemy a strategic advantage.

Lastly, by prosecuting a war with unmanned forces, concerns will arise over *jus in bello* criterion. The primary question remains whether it is morally correct to destroy civilian property and lives without any risk to our manned forces. The problem in analyzing this objection is found in the fact that the criterion is nebulous, its interpretation alters with time, and its application is heavily dependent on the context of the war. However, one can expect the issue to rise to the forefront in a limited war scenario conducted by unmanned assets.

Notes

¹⁷⁰ Senate, *Authorizing The President Of The United States To Conduct Military Air Operations And Missile Strikes Against The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia (Serbia And Montenegro)*, 106th Cong., 1999, WAIS Document Retrieval [Congressional Record: March 23, 1999 (Senate)], n.p.; on-line, Internet, 18 November 1999; available from the Congressional Record Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov], S3112.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² House, *U.S. Foreign Policy on Kosovo*, 105th Cong., 1998, WAIS Document Retrieval [Congressional Record: May 12, 1998 (Extensions)], n.p.; on-line, Internet, 18 November 1999; available from the Congressional Record Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov], E826.

¹⁷³ Bradley Graham, "Joint Chiefs Doubted Air Strategy," *Washington Post*, 5 April 1999, 1.

¹⁷⁴ House, *Authorizing President To Conduct Military Air Operations And Missile Strikes Against Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia*, 106th Cong., 1999, WAIS Document Retrieval [Congressional Record: April 28, 1999 (House)], n.p.; on-line, Internet, 12 January 2000; available from the Congressional Record Online via GPO Access [wais.access.gpo.gov]: H2442.

¹⁷⁵ Jeanne Cummings and Bob Davis, "Lack of Wide Support for Bombing poses Huge political Risk," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 March 1999, 28.

¹⁷⁶ Senate, *Authorizing The President Of The United States To Conduct Military Air Operations And Missile Strikes Against The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia (Serbia And Montenegro)*, S3110.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., S3113.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., S3112

¹⁸⁰ Statement of Senator Stevens (R-Alaska) in *Senate Authorizing The President Of The United States To Conduct Military Air Operations And Missile Strikes Against The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia (Serbia And Montenegro)*, S3111.

¹⁸¹ Statement of Senator Kerrey (D-Nebr.) in *Authorizing The President Of The United States To Conduct Military Air Operations And Missile Strikes Against The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia (Serbia And Montenegro)*, S3116.

¹⁸² Statement of Senator Mikulski (D-Md.) in *Senate, Authorizing The President Of The United States To Conduct Military Air Operations And Missile Strikes Against The Federal Republic Of Yugoslavia (Serbia And Montenegro)*, s3117.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

This paper has not been designed to argue against the development and deployment of unmanned assets. Quite the contrary; one can assume that these assets will be procured, fielded, and incorporated into operational plans. The important aspect is how these assets should be incorporated into our strategy, not if they should. The first set of conclusions will discuss the importance of using unmanned assets in the proper environment. After that, there will be a brief look at emphasis areas that must be improved if unmanned assets are to assume a larger part of our military strategy.

Weapons and Strategy Match

In order to be successful we must attain a proper match of weapons systems to the conflict that faces us. Throughout the history of airpower, this has been an acknowledged fact. For example, bombers were specifically designed for strategic attack. As time has progressed our focus has moved away from platform-centric thought, to an effects-based construct. We no longer associate strategic effects with a platform. This allows us to think of all weapons systems as being capable across the spectrum of conflict, provided they can produce a desired effect. Unfortunately, this is not entirely true. For example, today one realizes that political and public biases make nuclear weapons totally unacceptable for a limited war. However, this was not the case in the 1960s. Senior Air

Force officers, including a four star general, openly discussed the use of nuclear weapons in a close air support role (CAS).⁴⁴⁰ The point is not to critique past officers, but to highlight that concentrating solely on the military capability of systems has limitations.

This paper has discussed the impact of unmanned assets in two types of scenarios, air strikes and limited air war. In the air strike scenario, it was found that unmanned assets were almost an ideal system for a number of reasons consistent with political and public desires. First, they eliminate the concern over friendly casualties. Second, by not risking the capture of an aircrew (hence POWs), they ensure the situation will not linger on. Third, they offer the ability to claim victory regardless of the actual outcome. The reasons behind this are twofold. These assets make it possible to securely plan and execute a military option with a limited amount of pre-hostilities media coverage. Therefore, unrealistic expectations based on political rhetoric will not be present. Additionally, both politicians and the public accept an air strike as a political signal, rather than a military solution.

The match of unmanned assets to a limited war scenario is suspect. This paper proposes that unmanned assets might increase political fractures and decrease public support. In fact, some of the same attributes useful in a strike scenario have potentially harmful consequence in a limited war. The ability to eliminate casualties decreases the desire to “support our troops in harm’s way.” Additionally, some will call into question the moral efficacy of causing civilian deaths without risking lives. Next, unmanned assets may signal a decreased level of resolve and encourage adversaries to hold out for a longer period of time. The political leadership and the public might develop heightened expectations, based on unmanned assets’ technical capabilities and ability to accept

greater risk. These expectations would create disappointment if the desired objectives were not quickly met. Therefore, the Air Force should proceed cautiously in its endeavors to acquire a capability based solely on unmanned assets. Further research is required to assess the public and political biases towards the application of this force in a multitude of scenarios. One also needs to address command and control arrangements, the coordination process between political and military leaders, and the morality aspect in an unmanned-only limited war scenario.

Political Awareness

The research also pointed to inherent problems with air power, which are exaggerated with unmanned assets, and which must be addressed if the USAF hopes to increase the use of unmanned assets. First, the stereotypical image of the Air Force is that of a service absorbed with technology. Of course this is partially true, due in large part to the aerospace medium in which we operate. However, air power's heritage is fraught with examples of close interaction between political leaders and airpower application. It is time the Air Force embrace this tradition, and increase political science training as part of professional officer development.⁴⁴¹ This background will be particularly important with the advent of unmanned assets. These assets might make it very easy for political leaders to commit forces while simultaneously making it more difficult for military officers to plan and execute a strategy. The capability of unmanned assets to strike anywhere with little planning and essentially no immediate risk creates unprecedented possibilities for the use of force. Therefore, it is essential airpower leaders are fluent in the political aspects of force application. Only then will they be able to give

sound advice and create workable solutions, instead of simply servicing a given target set.

Consensus Building

Second, it was seen that air power, and to an even greater extent unmanned assets, offer the ability to commit forces into conflict with little or no consensus building. While this situation might actually help in a strike scenario, it can have a negative impact in an air war. The Weinberger Doctrine stated that “...before the US commits combat forces abroad, there must be some reasonable assurance we will have the support of the American people and their elected representatives in Congress.”⁴⁴² It was failure to gain such support that was cited as a major reason for the public’s poor attitude in the initial stages of the Kosovo conflict. The reason behind the poor effort can be attributed to a combination of a deficient theory of victory, the belief that air war required less support than other forms of war, and a corresponding lack of a PR campaign. Military leaders must pressure political leaders to gain such support even for an air war. If not, our strategy is forced, to an even greater degree, to chase the public support and the enemy.

Strategy Articulation

Third, military leaders need to articulate an “air war” strategy to politicians and the public. This is increasingly difficult for two reasons. First, a smaller percentage of the public and political sectors have intimate knowledge of the military. This creates a communication barrier that must be overcome. Second, coercion strategies are difficult to sell. Unfortunately, it is impossible to guess with certainty what action is required to change the mind of a decision-maker. Therefore, to an even greater extent than other

military strategies, coercive strategies are vulnerable to critique. However, the goal must be to articulate the strategy so that politicians and the public are well aware of the potential for tactical setbacks and collateral damage, but view it as an unfortunate necessity of a *successful* strategy. As was concluded in Chapter 4, failure to solve this problem might cause unmanned assets to be more susceptible to strategy inputs and imposed fluctuations, to the point of hindering its successful execution.

Public Relations

Finally, military leaders must place a greater emphasis on media training in education and warfighting. First, education must involve more than a sporadic lecture at various service schools and active participation by a handful of individuals. It must involve the gradual indoctrination of the force in the proper way to deal with the media. For example, this type of training can be incorporated into Flag exercises (e.g., Red Flag, Blue Flag, etc.). Numerous individuals can be interviewed during the exercise, and edited clips of those interviews can be presented at the end of the exercise period. Furthermore, this type of training is invaluable in combat, particularly in a limited war scenario. For instance, in ALLIED FORCE we dominated the conflict from a technology standpoint, but lost the media war. While numerous political and military personnel can share the blame, one thing is certain, we failed to sufficiently exploit the information available. We must develop the mentality that every action taken against the enemy affects domestic support. As such, we will have some misses and some hits. Moreover, we need to aggressively present our interpretation of the information. This is not meant to advocate fabrication of the truth in any manner, but the development of mechanisms that will allow us to quickly, accurately, and succinctly relate how questionable actions,

such as “dual use” targets, actually contribute to the success of the war. Furthermore, when obvious mistakes happen, we must be prepared to respond quickly and accurately. Failure to develop such mechanisms and mindset will hinder effective airpower employment and doom unmanned assets.

Notes

⁴⁴⁰ General Frederic H. Smith, “Nuclear Weapons and Limited War,” *Air University Quarterly Review*, Spring 1960, 25.

⁴⁴¹ Major General Link had a similar thought when he said Air Force officers have to stop training to become JFACCs. They need to study politics in order to become CINCs.

⁴⁴² Quoted from former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger. House, “Removal of United States Armed Forces From the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.”

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